

NEW BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY

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Devoted to Far West Life



*BUFFALO BILL'S
BLIND LEAD*

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Far West Life

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No. 344.

NEW YORK, April 12, 1919.

Price Six Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S BLIND LEAD;

OR,

PAWNEE BILL AND THE PRAIRIE PIRATES.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

"BUNKUM BEN" FROM HEADWATER.

Buffalo Bill, king of bordermen, reclined on the river bank, taking it easy, when his wandering gaze caught sight of a rather curious-looking derelict which seemed to be stranded near the center of the stream.

The North Fork of the Platte River, before it strikes the arid Nebraska plain, gives promise of becoming quite a stream.

It starts in the mountains of Colorado, and over a rapidly descending course it moves with all of the flurry and ambition of youth. But its ambition and courage seem to flunk completely as soon as it strikes upon the level plain, where there is so little for it to do, and it becomes at once sluggish, lazy, and treacherous.

It is broad and shallow, and there are places where, with a breadth of almost half a mile, you can hardly cross it with a rowboat without running aground in the shoals.

But for dangerous quicksands in certain places one might wade across it almost anywhere with safety.

It was on the bank of this river that Buffalo Bill was taking his ease, after a hard day of riding. It was near the middle of the warm afternoon, and the scout had been in the saddle, except for a short time at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, since an hour before dawn.

This was nothing for him; but the horse he had that day was not his best. The reason for this will be explained in the proper place.

At the first he thought that the object in the river was merely a piece of driftwood. Then it occurred to him that driftwood in the waters of the North Fork at that season was an infrequent object to the most watchful eyes.

It looked more like a boat. At this suggestion the scout sat up and stared at it harder, and as there was nothing the matter with his eyes, he made sure that it was a boat, and that there was a man in it.

This was interesting, and it might be important especially as the man was splashing in the water with his hands as if he was trying to convert himself into a side-wheel propeller.

The boat did not move either upstream or down.

It just swung back and forth at the bow, as if the stern was hitched to something by means of a hinge.

"Snagged!" muttered Buffalo Bill.

The scout sank back again, for when he settled down for some rest he made a business of it, as he did in every-thing.

That was the secret of his wonderful energy and endurance. He knew how to do a lot of resting for past and future needs when he had the opportunity.

But the next moment he sprang up again, for he saw another boat shoot out into the stream from the other side and its nose was directed toward the derelict.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, and picked up his rifle.

It looked as if there were a half dozen Indians in the boat which had just put out. And yet the scout knew better.

A young man with a painted face, a scalp lock bunched up on his crown, and two or three buzzard's feathers stuck in it isn't necessarily a specimen of the race of noble red men. The crew was made up with paint and feathers and nothing else, so far as the Indian part was concerned.

"They're Prairie Pirates—that's what they are, and I've struck into them sooner than I expected by a full two days' journey. Queer, too, for reports said that I would have to go a hundred miles or more farther before I should glimpse any of them," mused Buffalo Bill.

"Cuts my rest-up shorter, and promises the wind-up so much the earlier," he continued. "I suppose I'll have to do something for that pilgrim who seems to be stuck in the middle of the river. Though they probably won't murder him just for the sport of it. Perhaps I'll wait a bit and see what they do."

The man in the stranded boat worked harder than ever to get clear of the obstruction on which his craft was stuck. But it seemed to be a bootless struggle. The boat would not budge. It swung to and fro in the lazy current, and that was all.

Buffalo Bill put his field glass to his eye and sized up both the occupant of the derelict and the "Indians" in the other boat.

The one who was stranded was instantly recognized by the scout as a hanger-on at the saloons of a Colorado mining camp.

Buffalo Bill had seen him several times, but had had nothing to do with him, and had never taken the trouble to find out his pedigree.

There were too many of his kidney in the mining settlement to make it worth while to look them all up. They were like the hobos of the Eastern cities and towns—hardly worth the leather that it took to kick them out of the way.

"I believed they called him Bunkum Ben," he said. "He talked and guzzled whisky—that's all I remember about him. Those made-up Indians won't do anything worse than have a little fun with him, and that is all a bum is good for, anyway. Let him paddle."

The scout sank back again, more to avoid being observed than anything else. At the same time he kept an eye on the business that was doing on the surface of the sluggish river.

He saw that Bunkum Ben was splashing frantically to start his boat. He saw the other boat draw up to the derelict, and one of the pretended Indians jump into the craft that was struck.

Then there was a tussle, and Bunkum Ben got tumbled into the water. But in a moment they fished him out and he was dragged into the boat of the Prairie Pirates.

There they all seemed to have a rap at him on the ears with the backs of their hands, and the yells of Bunkum Ben quavered across the water with a pathos which was ludicrous to those who relished that sort of sport.

Buffalo Bill did not like it. He didn't mind their giving the bum a ducking—that was probably good for him, as it was likely that his skin needed the contact of water. But when it came to inflicting a severe punishment on Bunkum Ben, the scout made up his mind to draw the line when something happened that gave him cause.

From the opposite side of the river another, and then a third boat put out. Then, after a brief interval, three more boats shot out from the shore, making six in all, and each one of them containing half a dozen Prairie Pirates, all made up in Indian costume and paint.

"That looks lively," muttered the scout.

His position was a little too conspicuous. He crawled back among the shadows of a thicket, and then got upon his feet.

He hurried back to where his horse was picketed and led the animal in among the sparse-growing trees that fringed the banks of the river.

In that place trees grew scantily, even where there was water. And the plains were too dreary for description.

Having hidden the horse the best he could, the scout returned to a spot from which he could continue to observe the men in the boats.

He had not used his glasses when he saw the five boats put out, for he could see plainly enough, he thought, to make it unnecessary, since he felt confident as to the character and number of persons in the boats.

Now he surveyed them through his glass, however, and made another discovery that redoubled his interest. One of the boats contained a woman captive. Her face was not visible to the scout, but from her figure and attitude he felt certain that she was young.

The boats were by this time all lined up near the stranded boat. They had Bunkum Ben shivering and protesting in their midst.

They seemed to be plying him with questions, and when his replies were unsatisfactory they would hit him over the head with a paddle.

They were doing him no serious injury; but they were

giving him all the pain they could, and making him generally miserable with the terror of worse things to come.

"This is getting interesting," muttered the scout.

As to the character of the crews of the boats, he had not the shadow of a doubt.

He had been hearing of the depredations of the Prairie Pirates along the North Fork of the Platte for more than two months, although he had been at a place so distant that he could not take a hand in the game.

But the pirates were making the conditions intolerable to all peaceable citizens, while emigrants, whether in large parties or small, could get through the line of the pirates only at the greatest hazard, or by suffering heavy loss in valuables or lives.

Two of the best all-around guides of that region had been recently killed by these same Prairie Pirates.

The outlaw crew committed many of their depredations while disguised as Indians, and while the genuine redskins were ugly enough at that time, much was laid to them of which they were not guilty.

It was this state of things that Buffalo Bill had been asked by the commandant at the nearest frontier post to investigate.

The scout had been offered as many men as he would require to lead an expedition which should clean the dreaded outlaw gang off the earth.

But he had not yet had time to get to the post, and it looked as if he would need to open the ball before he could get any soldiers to help.

The prospect did not worry him any. He had been up against a big gang in a lone-hand game before, and he knew what was trumps.

But, as matters stood twenty minutes ago, when the scout flung himself down on the river bank, there had seemed to be no special hurry.

Now it was another story.

With a female captive in their hands, it must be a hustle to get her clear.

The boats were within easy range for a man with the rifle practice of the king of bordermen. But it would seem to be useless to open fire on them, when, at best, he could not hope to lay out enough of them to set the captive girl free.

When matters which have been gliding along with a degree of smoothness take an unexpected turn, and start a string of complications, these generally keep up until they cannot get any thicker.

So in this case, just when Buffalo Bill was deciding on a course to pursue to the end that the woman captive of the Prairie Pirates should be rescued, and something accomplished toward the cleaning out of the outlaw crew itself, a new incident came along to claim his attention.

It was in the shape of another boat on the river—as if there were not enough already.

It was nearly a mile up the stream, and near the middle of the placid current.

To the naked eye it was a mere speck on the surface of the water. But, again calling to his aid the field glass, the scout was able to make out the figure in the boat with such distinctness that an exclamation of astonishment came from his lips.

"It was my old pard, Pawnee Bill!"

At the sight of this famous scout at that time and place Buffalo Bill's surprise knew no bounds.

He had good reason to believe that Pawnee Bill was far away from that place, and engaged upon a mission most remote from the one which now claimed the attention of Cody himself.

"There's no keeping track or trace of that man," muttered the scout.

"But I'm glad to get a glimpse of him now—that is, if he doesn't run his nose into that nest of pirates before I can tell him of the danger."

It hardly seemed possible that Pawnee Bill could approach much closer to the other boats on the river without observing them.

And yet he came nearer and nearer, while the Prairie Pirates, having ceased their persecutions of Bunkum Ben, were getting their boats into line to cross over to the side from which Buffalo Bill was watching them.

"There has got to be a mix-up!" muttered the scout.

CHAPTER II.

A MIX-UP ON THE NORTH FORK.

It was Buffalo Bill who began what he termed the "mix-up."

He did it by drawing a bead on one of the Prairie Pirates in the leading boat.

The rifle crack and the yell of the stricken outlaw joined in the echoes from the thin timber line that fringed the opposite bank of the stream.

The shot went true, as a matter of course, and the one who was hit made his death plunge into the river, nearly upsetting the boat in the act.

Then followed a chorus of shouts, which would have given away the deception attempted by the Indian make-up of the pirates if nothing else had done so.

Indians never expressed themselves by shouts—their savage ways of yelling has an intonation unlike that of any other race of beings on earth.

The savages of all races yell when they are pained or pleased. But the American Indian has a yell of his own that is totally unlike the specimens in that line as furnished by other barbarians.

The shot and death of their comrade plunged the party into chaotic confusion in no time.

Besides, the lone boatman up the river seemed to be aroused from his dream, for he espied the other boats for the first time and ceased paddling.

Something went up to his eyes, and Buffalo Bill knew it was a field glass like his own.

He was sizing up the crew upon which Buffalo Bill had fired. And it did not seem to take him long to make up his mind which side in the affair he would choose to back up. Nor did he appear to be in the least daunted by the heavy odds against him. For, instead of trying to seek shelter, he plunged his paddle deeper into the stream and sent his light boat fairly leaping over the surface in the direction of the Prairie Pirates.

The latter, not having observed the direction from which the death shot had come, and seeing Pawnee Bill slashing the water with his paddle as if he meant to go through them, inferred that it was he who had fired the fatal missile.

As a consequence their leader ordered three of them to fire at Pawnee Bill. And they made a scramble for their rifles, which lay in the bottoms of the boats, as they had little idea of having use for them then.

Crack! crack! crack! stuttered Buffalo Bill's new repeater, and two of the men who would have fired upon Pawnee Bill tumbled toward each other, smitten with death.

The third was merely snipped on the left ear by the hastily fired shot, and he uttered a snarl and flung himself over the lap of the man back of him to avoid the sudden storm of lead.

By this time they realized that they had another enemy to contend with, and that it was some one who was himself sheltered, and who could pick them off just as he liked.

Their leader was touched with a sudden suspicion as to the identity of their unseen marksman.

Repeating rifles were not very common then, and yet more rare were the men who could snap out three shots with one so rapidly and make every shot show its mark.

That leader, made up like an Indian, the same as the others, was a man with rather striking features.

He made few words, and these proclaimed him to be a man of education and natural refinement.

But the paint on his face did not disguise the lines of malignity which, young though he was, had traced themselves deeply about his eyes.

A life of hate was stamping itself on his face.

Lines of cunning showed under his eyes. A curl of scorn twisted his lips. The set of his jaw told of a will power which it were dangerous to oppose.

Such was the leader of the Prairie Pirates—a young man as yet but little known on the border, although he was fast getting to be feared.

In thus showing his hand Buffalo Bill had acted against his inclination. The girl captive must be rescued. And with her guarded by so many captors, that end could not be accomplished by one or two men in a mere dash, no matter how nifty it might be.

His manner of procedure to the end of the girl's rescue

would have been a different one, and less open, but the approach of Pawnee Bill spoiled the plan.

The position of Pawnee Bill, down close to the level of the water, precluded his making out the inmates of the boats so clearly as Cody had done, and he was unaware of the presence of a girl prisoner.

But he was just reckless enough to pitch into the Prairie Pirates without waiting to see what kind of a backing he was likely to receive.

That compelled Buffalo Bill to swing out with his trump cards, and make sure of the first tricks that were going.

By the time the Prairie Pirates had time to realize what was doing, Pawnee Bill was close enough to take a hand in the game.

He dropped the paddle and picked up his rifle, and while the boat was still going ahead under the momentum, he fired two shots at the pirates, directing them at the occupants of the nearest boat.

Only one of the outlaws was killed, but another was doubled up with a splintered rib and lacerated flesh, while a third howled with a branded cheek from the deflected bullet that had splintered the rib of his comrade in the same line with him.

It was a good deal of execution for two shots, and it mixed up the Prairie Pirates almost as seriously as the swift shooting of Buffalo Bill had done.

They were already making a swift break for the shore. Of course, they drove their boats toward the shore from which they had but just come.

Their young, stern-faced leader gave his commands in a terse, almost metallic tone, which brought a singularly perfect and eager obedience.

The behavior of his followers seemed to imply that the leader was either feared by them, or else he had subjected them to a discipline that was almost military in its strictness.

Buffalo Bill, in observing the retreat of the Prairie Pirates, was struck by this peculiarity. And he recalled what had been said of that leader by those who had come in contact with him, to their cost.

It was to the effect that there was no other man on the border whose power over his followers was so great and so constant as that of the so-called "Prairie Paul," pirate of the Platte.

The scout had already scanned the occupants of the boats with his glass in an effort to pick out the leader, and if possible to make him out plainly enough so as to be able to recognize him upon another occasion.

But it chanced that the young leader's position was such that he was hidden partly from the view of Buffalo Bill by other occupants of the same boat.

At the same time, in response to a quick command of the outlaw leader, the boat containing the prisoner was pushed to the front of the retreating line of boats, and two extra men leaped into it with their paddles to lend their aid to increase the speed of the craft.

Buffalo Bill knew that the water was so shallow that his horse could ford the stream at that point. But he was not certain as to the character of the bottom, and as he knew that there were quicksands a little farther up, and at some other points along the length of the river, near the shores, he dared not risk his horse at any except a regular fording place.

There was such a ford a mile above. He had noticed it an hour ago, when he was riding down along the sinuous course of the stream. But it was not his purpose to depend upon going back to that to cross the stream until he had sized up the situation a little more carefully.

It was not likely that Prairie Paul would have beaten a retreat in the manner he was doing unless he had started out on an expedition of such importance that he was afraid that a temporary reduction of his force would result in a defeat of his project. He was acting more like the prudent commander of a military force than the mere leader of a lawless crew of prairie pirates.

The boats were by this time well under way in their retreat to the other side, and they had the one containing their prisoner next to the leading boat.

This guarded the captive from any possibility of rescue, and, at the same time, the boats being in such a perfect

line, there was some hazard of hitting the prisoner in case Buffalo Bill should continue firing.

The risk was the greater as the length of the range increased. The scout realized this, and would not shoot again until the situation shifted.

Meanwhile, Bunkum Ben, dripping wet, but happy to find that he was still alive, and that the torture to which he had been subjected was not likely to be renewed, set about paddling his craft, at last free of the snag, toward the shore where Buffalo Bill was at that moment concealed.

When he had been tumbled out of his boat, the latter was thrown clear of the snag, where it had been swinging at the moment when the scout had first discovered him.

The scout was thinking hard and fast what to do about trying for the rescue of the girl prisoner of the Prairie Pirates, when he saw Bunkum Ben's boat jam its nose up against the bank of the river almost at his feet.

Ben leaped ashore, but he had not taken three forward steps before he uttered a startled exclamation.

It was called out by the grip of Buffalo Bill's hand on his arm.

"Ho! so it is you, Cody?" exclaimed the man, as he looked into the face of the scout.

"It is I, Bunkum Ben. But you needn't shout it quite so loud. Sit down here on the ground, man—I want to ask you something."

Ben sat down, looking as "meek as Moses."

CHAPTER III.

DIGGING FOR THE TRUTH.

Bunkum Ben may have been a good-looking man in his day; but that day was long past. He was not an old man, either, except as a man may grow old without the lapse of many years. He had probably passed his fiftieth milestone; but it was ten to one that he was unconscious of the fact at the time, for he was either asleep or drunk.

As he leaped ashore on the bank of the North Fork and was nabbed by Buffalo Bill, he was in a fairly sober state.

This was by no fault of his own. He had merely run out of the supply of the kind of fuel with which he was in the habit of keeping up steam. No doubt he had some whisky inside of him. Absolutely without it, he would not have been Bunkum Ben at all. But his fright, the necessity for work when he found himself on a snag, and, lastly, the ducking all had the effect of sobering him.

He looked woebegone and feeble. More, he looked hopeless, almost despairing, when he found that he had got to endure a talk with Buffalo Bill, with the wonderful eyes of the scout fixed upon him the while.

For this state of mind of Bunkum Ben's there were good and sufficient reasons, some of which will presently appear.

"To begin with, Ben," began the scout, "how long had you been swinging back and forth on that snag when those fellows ran afoul of you?"

"Er—I reckon I must have been stuck half an hour pretty nigh," drawled Bunkum Ben.

"You were coming down the stream, of course, for you would never try to paddle against the current?"

"Yas, I was comin' down, easy like. I dunno how I come to run agin' the durned snag. But fust I knew I was stuck, and I'll be whanged if I could make the boat budge."

"You started from the mining camp at Headwater?"

"Waal—er—yas."

"When did you start from the camp?"

"I'm whanged if I can tell ye, eggzactly. Ye see, driftin' down with a slow current is sorter monotonous, and I fell inter a doze once or twicet."

"Did you start last night?"

"Must have been yesterday some time. Couldn't come so fur to-day."

"And you may have left the camp two days ago—night before last, for instance?"

"Maybe I did. But I don't see why you're so durned particular."

"I am particular, and you had better be careful to give me as many straight facts as you can."

"Of course, Mr. Cody, of course. I'll tell ye the truth as far as I kin remember it, but ye must make allowances for my gittin' sorter confused about dates. Ye see, I'm

a reg'lar sort of a feller, and the days aire pretty nigh all alike to me."

"The days are all about the same to you, there's no doubt about that. But that won't let you out of telling the truth in this case, and the whole of it."

"You will want to forget some things because the telling of them won't sound well for you. But that won't do. You came straight from the camp at Headwater, and, while I know to start with, that you would never have left the camp if you hadn't been fired out of it, that part of the yarn isn't what I'm interested in."

"You were on a spree before you left, and they got tired of having you around in all of the places. That part of it I'll take for granted, and you needn't make any excuses. Did that new and fresh young mine owner and prospector, Thede Travis, come back to the camp after I came away, four days ago?"

"Waal, I don't mind tellin' ye that. Him and me ain't no great friends. Yas, he did come back. But he didn't stay more'n two or three hours."

"Was he alone?"

"Yas."

"Did he seem to have any friends in the camp?"

"Nary a friend to start on. But when he went away two fellers went with him."

"Who were they?"

"One of 'em was called 'Red' Grimes. T'other I didn't know, but they was a pair that seemed to be always together. Sort of pards, I reckon."

"Bums, like yourself?"

"No. But they wasn't pop'lar in the camp. There was talk of runnin' 'em out."

"Where did Travis and this crew go when they left the camp?"

"Durned if I know. I heered some sayin' that they was goin' on a prospectin' trip furdur up in the mountains, and some of 'em laffed at that. I reckon, though, that they made off in the direction of this here river—some'eres nigh the headwaters of the North Fork."

Buffalo Bill reflected for a moment in silence. Bunkum Ben regarded him a little anxiously. So far no questions had been asked that he had any objections to answering. But they were bound to come, and he knew it.

He had the best of reasons for knowing that Buffalo Bill had a way of scenting all kinds of crookedness, and that there was no throwing him off the track.

In what he knew about Thede Travis, at the camp of Headwater, there was just one episode that bore relation to himself, and he dreaded disclosing it, for he feared that the scout might impose a penalty of some kind, and Bunkum Ben did not like penalties.

At the same time, he had so little appreciation of the fine points of justice that he did not understand the principles upon which Buffalo Bill was in the habit of meting out the consequences which the shady characters of the border earned for themselves.

Bunkum Ben was like a dog that gets thrashed for all sorts of things, whether he is to blame or not.

"Well," said Buffalo Bill at last. "What did Thede Travis want you to do, Benjamin?"

"Oh, whang it all!" groaned Ben.

"You expected me to ask that, didn't you?"

"Lord yas!"

"Answer it straight and it will be all right. I'll know whether you tell the truth or not, and I won't make any mistake."

"He wanted me to do a little spyin' for him, that's all. But ye know that ain't in my line—"

"I know it is exactly in your line, if you only could keep sober long enough at a time to make a success of it. How much of it did you do before you got caught?"

"Whang it all! I reckon you kin read anybody's mind, pretty nigh."

"Answer my question, Ben."

"I got ketched right off. It was about a letter that I was hired to kerry over to a party in the camp. I dunno much about it. But Travis said he reckoned it might interest him, and he fetched out a gun to prove that I better give him the first readin' of it."

"You mean, he agreed to give you unlimited whisky for the privilege. A gun on one side of the argument and a

bottle on the other. But you needn't mind about that. It isn't your mischief that I'm laying for just now. How about the letter?"

"I gi'n it to Travis, jest as he ast me to."

"Then what?"

"Barker, the feller the letter was to, knowed somehow that the letter was to be sent to him by me. I reckon there was a 'greement 'forehand. He was 'spectin' the letter, and knowin' my weakness for strong drink he hed an eye on me."

"And he caught you at your game?"

"Sorter."

"Did he get the letter?"

"Yas. Jest as I was handin' of it to Travis. Barker, he's one of them quick sort of fellers, same as you be—quick on the draw. He jammed a gun agin' my nose an' another agin' Travis' ear, and we didn't stop to argy the case. It was after that that they run 'em out of the camp."

"And you?"

"I run myself out. More 'spectable, I reckon, to have a sudden business call, and go on yer own hook, than it is to go on the run with cayuses and guns treadin' on yer heels."

"No doubt about that. Did Travis and you go together?"

"Lord, no! We ain't pards. He squealed on puttin' up his part of the contract. I never seen no whisky for the service I done him."

"And the two you have spoken of went away with Travis?"

"Yas."

"Looks as if he was recruiting a gang," said Buffalo Bill reflectively. "And that is another straw to show that he has something to do with the Prairie Pirates. He is a young man, well educated, and from the East, and I wouldn't naturally suspect him of taking a permanent part in a regular outlaw organization."

"And yet, it looks like it. And it looks as if I was on a trail that would lead me to a clearing up of the business, that is, if they don't get the better of me."

"Travis is in the gang, and acts as a sort of recruiting sergeant—we'll grant that as a starter. He is picking up the offscourings of all the settlements and mountain camps to increase the numbers of the gang."

"But who is the leader? There must be a cool man behind the whole business. They are getting to be the scourge of the prairie all about here. They have two or three squads at work, and they strike in more than one place at once."

"Here are a part of them right here, and in such disguise that it isn't easy to identify any of them. And that isn't all."

Buffalo Bill again turned upon Bunkum Ben, who appeared to be falling into a doze, standing up.

"That crew on the river, who just held you up—they weren't redskins, though their skins appeared to be red," said the scout.

"No, they wa'n't Injuns," said Bunkum Ben.

"What did they dump you into the river for?"

Ben hesitated. His eyes had a faraway look in them.

"Come, now is the time to brace up and tell the whole truth. You will find it to your interest to put yourself on record, once and for all, against the whole tribe of Prairie Pirates who are operating under Prairie Paul. There is something operating against them that will wipe them off the face of the prairie quicker than you have any idea of."

Ben braced up. He was afraid of the Prairie Pirates, especially of the leader. But somehow the speech and airs of the king of the bordermen made him feel that Prairie Paul's rule in the land was drawing to a close.

"They wanted me to tell 'em what I seed comin' down the river."

"Did you do it?"

"They'd held me under water till it quit bubblin' if I hadn't."

"What did you see that they were so anxious to know about?"

"Nothin' but a small outfit on t'other side of the river goin' toward Headwater. The people had lost one of their party—a gal—and they axed me about her. That's all I knew, and all I could tell the made-up Injuns."

"That was enough!" muttered Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER IV.

A RUN OF BAD LUCK.

Buffalo Bill had obtained the most important item of information from Bunkum Ben at last. He knew that there was a small party on their way to the mining camp, and he had expected to meet them coming up the river on the same side that he was descending. He well understood that they were too weak to take the risks of such a journey in the condition of the country along the North Fork.

He had expected—or hoped, that they would not get fairly started on their journey before he should either meet them or be able to carry out his other plans in regard to the prairie outlaws.

Now he knew that the girl captive whom he had glimpsed in one of the boats on the river was the missing girl from the party referred to.

Yet it did not appear from the account of Bunkum Ben that there had been a fight between the Prairie Pirates and the gold hunters.

The latter were made up of a party of three men, the wife and adopted daughter of one accompanying them.

One of the men was no other than Philip Ross, a wealthy young man from the East, who was looking for an investment.

Ross was a fellow of force and character, and he had come by his money through the death of a friend who had discovered a hidden cache of gold in the Black Hills.

The friend had been killed by Indians, and Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill had been instrumental in helping Ross to retain possession of his legacy, which for a short time was in a ticklish situation.

The incidents of this affair have been told in a former story, and need not be repeated here.

But the taste of adventure obtained by Philip Ross in that case made him thirst for more. Besides he wanted to do his hustling in the West, where he could make his fortune double itself.

The only other members of the little gold-hunting party whom it is necessary to mention are Mr. and Mrs. Roger Hallam and their niece, who was also their adopted daughter, Bertha.

This girl, who had plenty of beauty, and spirit to go with it, had had some tough experiences in a Texan Indian raid some time before, the incidents of which have also been narrated in a previous story.

Now she was in the midst of what was likely to prove the most important episode of her career.

From the moment that Philip Ross had first seen pretty Bertha, he had been too thoroughly charmed to see anything else very clearly.

His desire to be near her was a heavy pull to draw him toward the mining country at Headwater. In joining the fortunes of the little party of gold hunters he became a seeker for a double prize—for love and gold.

Just how far Bertha favored his suit it would not be fair to say. She was a girl, and knowing her power, seemed bent upon using it to her utmost.

The truth was, she had once been deceived by the character of a lover, and since that time she had not seemed to have any too much confidence in the opposite sex.

There was one man whom she trusted fully—Buffalo Bill. Whether or not she entertained any stronger sentiment for the great scout, she had never told any one.

Cody was not the man to encourage that sort of thing, but he was human enough to be impressed by the warm demonstrations of gratitude which she had once or twice made in moments when, perhaps, she was hardly aware of what she said and did.

Her adopted father knew that she had gone out a way from the camp at noon for a lively gallop on her own horse. Philip Ross was distressed because she had firmly, yet laughingly, declined to allow him to accompany her on the ride.

He had argued that it was not safe for her to go alone, and in this he was right. But the fact that he showed how eager he was to be with her made the girl perverse, so she resolutely refused to let him come with her.

When she had been gone for an hour, and no signs of

her were seen, and they were ready to resume their journey, the first faint alarm of Mr. Hallam and Philip assumed graver proportions.

Ross had had experience enough on the border to be able to follow a plain prairie trail with tolerable certainty, and he set out alone in pursuit of the willful girl.

The camp had been pitched near the river. There was only the sparest growth of timber at that point.

Bertha had gone out toward the open prairie and disappeared beyond a swell in the gently rolling surface.

Philip soon found where she had changed her course and returned to the river, striking the latter at a point two or three miles above the place where her friends were encamped. From there she would have returned to the camp. But just there Philip Ross discovered unmistakable evidence that she had been captured, and from the signs he observed he judged that her captors were Indians.

In this we know that he was mistaken, although it is easy to understand how he made the mistake.

The discovery filled the brain of the young man with a fever of anxiety, and he was soon racing along the trail of the girl's captors.

That trail showed that the captors of Bertha Hallam were too numerous to be met by a single opponent, and also, what was more singular, that they were without horses.

They seemed to be making for a certain point along the banks of the North Fork.

On horseback it was easy for Ross to warm up to the trail, and it was not long before he came upon the girl's captors so suddenly that he was discovered by them before he had time to retreat.

He saw nothing of their prisoner in the glimpse which he obtained of them. That did not convince him, however, that she was not with them.

Made up as Indians as they were, they kept up the bluff by further imitation in yelling and the general antics of their race upon discovery of a foe in their midst.

They turned upon the young horseman and dashed toward him like a whirlwind, several of them hurling their hatchets, others firing their rifles, and all yelling like so many fiends.

A bullet nipped the horse in the flank, another notched the rider's left ear, a third scraped Ross' thigh, while two of the hatchets whiffed so close to the young man's head that he ducked in an involuntary attempt to dodge the missiles.

And yet no serious damage was done to either the horse or its rider; but it was a close call, and Ross knew it.

He had good nerve, but he knew that nerve couldn't save him if he kept still and gave them another inning.

He flung up his rifle and made a quick shot back at the crowd of yelling foes, and then dashed ahead without waiting to see whether the shot was effective or not.

As a matter of fact, he wounded one of the men, but not seriously enough to throw him out of the game.

Then he was off at a pace that they could not begin to follow without horses. With some small trees and foliage to shield him, he was comparatively safe from the next volley of bullets that they sent after him.

But he knew then that he could not rescue Bertha Hallam from her captors without help. He knew, also, that such assistance as Mr. Hallam might give would be next to useless.

Ross rode swiftly until he was safe from the bullets of the foe. Then he pulled up to consider the situation.

"What do they want of the girl?—that is the question," he asked himself.

Even with his inexperience, there was something about the style of the painted crew that puzzled him.

He recalled some things which he had heard from the lips of Buffalo Bill, and these did not accord with the make-up and behavior of these pretended Indians.

A strong impression that this was not an ordinary Indian raid was borne in upon him. He had heard something about the Prairie Pirates and of Prairie Paul, their mysterious leader, at the last post they had visited. But at the moment it did not occur to him that these painted rascals belonged to the gang.

Ross was in a place where the assistance of a man like Buffalo Bill would have been valuable beyond measure.

The distance back to the camp was not great, and Ross soon put Mr. Hallam and the other man of the party in possession of the facts of the situation.

The decision was made immediately that all would change their course so as to bring them back to the river, and that they should hover near enough to the captors of Bertha, so that they should be informed of their every move, and be prepared to take advantage of the first opportunity for her rescue.

In the meantime there was a chance of encountering some experienced scout, or a stronger party of gold hunters or emigrants, who might aid them to rescue the girl from the supposed Indians.

The incident just detailed occurred a short time before the events told in the three preceding chapters.

Mr. Hallam had encountered Bunkum Ben and had asked him about the pretended party. But they had obtained little information of value from him. And they knew at the start that they could not hope for any assistance from Ben, whose face and speech proclaimed his besotted condition.

Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill began to wonder what had become of Pawnee Bill, whom he had seen coming down the river.

He swept the bosom of the stream with his glass, but saw no signs of the scout.

"He has gone ashore on the other side, probably, with an idea of getting that girl out of the clutches of the Prairie Pirates," was Buffalo Bill's conclusion.

"But the party is too strong for one man to tackle, even a man with the reckless nerve of Pawnee Bill. I'll cross over and take a hand in the game."

The scout decided to ride up the stream to a fording place, as that would afford but little lost time, and the safety of the proceeding more than made up for the extra trouble.

Cody was not the man to take unnecessary chances. He had known too many heavy stakes to be thrown away for the lack of a little precaution.

"Benjamin," he said, with an air of solemnity which was the only thing which could impress the rather weak will of the man, "it'll be night pretty soon, and I've got to make good use of the time there is left. You will stay here until I get back if you care anything about living. You can't be friends with everybody. If I catch you hobnobbing with any of Prairie Paul's gang I'll count you as one of them, and you know what'll happen to you."

"Oh, Lord, Cody, you know that I—"

"I know that you'd sell your soul for a sup of whisky, and I know, too, that you're mortally afraid of dying with your boots on. Huddle yourself down right where you are and let me find you there when I come back, which may be at any minute."

Bunkum Ben obeyed.

The eyes and voice of Buffalo Bill gave him a kind of scare that nothing else could have done.

The scout flung himself into the saddle.

He raced up the river to a fording place and crossed over to the other side.

Before starting he had made sure by the aid of his glass, that at least a part of the boats which had been used by the Prairie Pirates were still nestled close under the shelving river bank on the other side, where the occupants had hidden them upon making their hasty landing.

Once fairly on the other side, he raced boldly down the stream again, following a little used trail that ran close to the river bank.

Before coming in sight of the spot where he believed the outlaws to be assembled, Buffalo Bill made a dash out of the timber to the edge of the open prairie.

There, at the first sweeping glance, he saw the two white-topped wagons of Hallam's gold-seeking caravan, and he instantly divined that this was the party which he had been informed was on its way to Headwater mining camp.

He did not know the names of any of those who made up the little party. But he guessed that the girl whom he had seen in one of the boats of the outlaws belonged to the caravan.

He wheeled his horse and started toward the emigrant camp. As he did so, he heard the spiteful crack of a rifle, and his horse pitched forward with a whine of pain.

The scout landed on his feet.

A glance told him that the shot from ambush, poorly aimed though it was, had broken one of the horse's fore-legs.

He turned and sent a bullet into the animal's brain to end its misery.

Then he made ready to meet the rush which he expected from the enemy.

CHAPTER V.

OVERWHELMING ODDS.

There was no rush.

A thin puff of smoke rising above the trees a full hundred yards down the stream showed where the shot came from. It showed that a foe had been hiding there, on the watch, and that it had been the foe's fool luck to drop a good horse belonging to a good man, more by chance than because he was a good marksman.

The truth was, the result of the attempt proved that he was a poor shot, for he had aimed at the head of Buffalo Bill and had hit a foreleg of the horse which the scout was riding.

Bad luck for the scout, and nothing else. Cody knew it. He knew that there were more than a score of the Prairie Pirates hidden in the thin timber belt, and that they would sneak up and try to pick him off if he were to give them a chance.

Ordinarily Buffalo Bill would hardly have hesitated to go ahead and try making things lively for the enemy, regardless of the odds. But at the very beginning of his present expedition he had been greeted by an ill omen.

He was not superstitious to the same degree that most bordermen were. But hardly any man that ever lived, no matter how well educated or sensible, ever pursued a career full of peril and adventure for a great while without falling into the habit of observing the seeming connection with certain omens of good and ill fortune, and the trains of circumstances that followed them.

It is so with sailors and soldiers, while great travelers and explorers, almost before they are aware of it, fall into the same habit.

The result is, that they come to look for a succession of mishaps of greater or lesser importance if they are treated to one at the beginning of a new undertaking.

Men who plunge into games of chance, whether for gain or sport, even those who engage in stock speculations, are apt to become more or less superstitious as to runs of good luck and bad.

Likely it is all nonsense; but the habit of believing in "luck" is a hard one to cure.

It was an impulse of this kind and nothing else that caused Buffalo Bill to refrain at that moment from attempting to make swift payment for the injury which the shot of the ambushed foe had done to him.

Not that he had anything like a quail of fear. He merely felt that things were running against him for the time, and that the fact called for extraordinary caution on his part if he would succeed in rescuing the girl captive from the outlaw gang.

Then, too, he wished to learn something about the small caravan which was in camp in such dangerous proximity to the Prairie Pirates.

He thought it possible that the members of the emigrant party knew nothing of the nearness of the outlaw foe.

Striking into a loping trot, the scout was soon within hailing distance of the wagon camp.

He soon spied a man on the wheel of one of the wagons looking at him through a glass, and the scout paused and returned the compliment.

An ejaculation of amazement burst from his lips.

"That is young Ross!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill.

In a few moments the scout was face to face with the young man, shaking him by the hand and putting questions as fast as Ross could spit out the answers.

It did not take long for the border king to get possession of the facts of the situation, including the capture of Bertha Hallam.

The mention of the identity of the girl brought him another shock of surprise. At the same time he had figured out the sentiment which the young man entertained

for the girl. And Buffalo Bill seemed to feel again the tremendous kiss of gratitude which Bertha Hallam had given him when he had saved her from death many months before.

"Of all the men in the world, you are the one that I have wished a hundred times in the last hour that I might see," said Ross, after the whole story of the capture of Bertha had been told.

Hallam came up at the moment, and the warmth with which he greeted the scout when Ross introduced him showed that he was quite as well pleased at the coming of Cody as was the younger man.

"By the way," said the scout, "I reckoned it was possible that Pawnee Bill was with you, when I caught sight of your wagons a few minutes ago. Haven't you seen him?"

"Yours is the first friendly face we have seen," Ross answered.

"Pawnee Bill landed from a boat on this side of the river and at a point pretty nearly opposite here. I have heard no shooting, so it can't be that he has pitched into that crew of desperadoes yet."

"He is pure nerve, and the quickest man with the pistol I've ever seen yet."

"Quicker than yourself?"

"With the small guns, I think he is."

"Then the two of you make a tough combination to get up against."

"We have lined up together, with red devils or white ones in front of us, many times," said Cody.

"Pawnee Bill is all right, Ross, and if we can have him to chip in on the trick against the crew of Prairie Pirates, yonder, they'll think a cyclone has hit them."

"Do you reckon that we are strong enough to attack that number? You say there are no genuine Indians among them."

"I never stop to count up forces when a thing has got to be done. But now that they know I am on this side of the river, and that I can, from here, no longer command a view of the river, they're likely to take to their boats again and try for a sneak downstream."

"Besides, now that they have shot my horse, they will believe it to be easy to get out of my way."

"We have two or three extra horses, and you can have one. There is a little black gelding, not fairly broken to the saddle, and I haven't had the nerve to mount him since he fired me over his head the first time I tried for it."

"Let me see him," said the scout, in his decisive way.

The next moment he was looking at a sleek but somewhat lank young horse, whose small head, wide nostrils, and broad chest, with limbs so slender that they looked like pipe stems, told Buffalo Bill that he had found an animal of rare possibilities in speed, spirit, and endurance.

"Is he yours, Ross?" he asked.

"Yes. Hallam and I bought a bunch together, and in dividing them up this one seemed to be useless to him, so I took him as a part of my share."

"It is just what I seem to need at the present time," said the scout.

Perhaps the sale of a horse was never made any quicker than that one, for Buffalo Bill was the owner of the handsome gelding inside of a minute after he had first set eyes on the animal.

And it was not much more than another minute before the horse was fitted with saddle and bridle and the king of bordermen was riding over the prairie with the speed of a cyclone.

Arrow—which was the name that Ross had given to the gelding—had the most peculiar gait of any horse that the scout had ever bestrode.

His gallop was unusually long in its reach, and taken seemingly without effort. There was a rhythmic pulsation of the whole body, as if the horse were running to the time of music.

To ride the animal was singularly fascinating.

While Arrow had been intractable with Philip Ross, in Buffalo Bill he seemed to recognize the master for whom he had been waiting.

While he pulled hard on the bit, and seemed so full of surplus strength and spirit that he could hardly be curbed, yet he made no attempt to throw his rider, as he had done in the case of Ross.

"This is good luck, anyhow!" muttered the scout, as he brought Arrow about on the course and again drew near to the white-topped wagon of Hallam's camp.

By this time the brief twilight of prairie land was falling over the river and plain.

There is no time now to lose, Ross," said the scout, as he pulled up at the side of the young man.

The latter could only admire the way in which the king of the border had tamed the wild prairie steed.

"Will you make a dash for the camp of the outlaws?" Ross asked.

"For the river first, so that I may make sure whether they have struck down the river or not."

"And if they have?"

"Horses are faster than boats, or the slow current of the stream. But I suspect that they will not try the river again until after dark. For that matter, it is queer that they should trust themselves to anything so slow as row-boats at all.

"I think that they expect to be joined by reinforcements at some point below here, and there they will have horses. So the sooner we get after them, the better."

Hallam and Ross were quickly mounted and ready to follow the lead of the scout. The remaining man of the party was left to guard the wagons, although the others were unlikely to get so far away from the camp that they could not return instantly in case of an attack.

The dash for the river was made, and they came in sight of it at a point from which they could almost see the camp of the enemy.

But just then they heard shouts, and saw a large body of horsemen dash into the midst of the Prairie Pirates.

They were reinforcements for the gang!

CHAPTER VI.

• BOATS, BULLETS, AND BANDITS.

Of the twenty-five Prairie Pirates who had come out on the river in boats, two or three were counted out in the shooting which Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill had taken part in while they were in sight.

This left about twenty-two of the original number in good fighting trim.

But in the glimpse which Buffalo Bill and his companions obtained of the reinforcing party, who had joined them on horseback, they judged that the newcomers numbered nearly, if not quite, fifty men.

They were all well mounted, with thirty led horses, and all literally "armed to the teeth."

The whole party presented overwhelming odds to the five men—counting Pawnee Bill—opposed to them.

The hearts of Ross and Hallam sank as they realized that Bertha Hallam was helpless among that powerful and lawless crew. But the anxiety of Buffalo Bill was increased in only one direction.

"It is a hopeless case. To try for a rescue against such odds would be to throw away our lives without hope of any good result!" groaned Ross.

"To make an open attack, of course, it would be giving them the battle at the start," said the scout.

"Then you see no hope?"

"There's hope enough to float a ship. It calls for strategy first, nerve next, and probably some quick shooting in the windup. But we'll win."

"I don't see where you can gather any hope out of the situation."

Buffalo Bill's manner suddenly became stern, like that of a military commander before a battle.

"I think, Mr. Ross," he said, "that I may depend upon you to stay in the fight as long as there is anything doing."

"To the death!" was the low response.

"There is too much depending on the issue for me to weaken, even if I was the greatest natural coward in the world," said Hallam grimly.

"That is all I ask. Any man is a coward when it comes to a question of his own life. It is the necessity of putting up a fight for somebody else that keeps him facing the guns when he feels like running away."

"Do you think they will go down the river to-night, now

that the expected horses and reinforcements have joined them?" asked Ross.

"No. It is going to be too dark. Whatever plans they may have for the immediate future, I reckon they are planned for this vicinity, and that they expected to meet a little below this point. Their encounter with me, and the capture of Miss Hallam, made this part of the crowd stay here until the others came up, as they had no horses for continuing the journey, and they didn't fancy boating while Pawnee Bill and I were popping at them from the shore."

The scout declared that it was now dark enough for their purpose. He seemed more anxious to protect his new horse from any chance shot from the enemy than himself.

The timber grew so sparsely that there was little difficulty in making their way through it with their horses. They kept within its shadows until they were so close to the encampment of the foe that the stamping of the horses and faint mumble of voices were audible.

Then the scout dismounted and left his horse in charge of Hallam while he crept closer yet to reconnoiter.

It was now so dark that, while crouching close to the ground, nothing was visible directly in front of him, on the same level with his face.

He soon reached a point where there was quite a thicket, and through the shrubbery he could see the flare of a large camp fire which had just been got to going.

Drawing closer yet, he could see the forms of the men gathered about the big fire. Several were moving about, as if engaged in the preparation of supper. Some were standing. Others were lounging on the ground, and one appeared at the moment to be addressing the others. But his tones were so low and guarded that Buffalo Bill could catch hardly a word that was spoken.

When he had ceased, however, one of the men jumped up and exclaimed:

"Three cheers for Prairie Paul, the nerviest man for his years on the plains!"

Instantly seventy odd voices were raised in the response, a shout that made the air tremble.

"Not much attempt at secrecy about that," muttered the scout.

"I suppose that they think they are powerful enough in numbers so that they need have no fear."

"And in an open fight I reckon it would take a good-sized company of soldiers to make them give in. We can't give them an open fight, for it looks as if it was up to me to cut them off before I can have time to go back and get help. I don't dare to get away from them for the length of time it would take for me to get to the post and back. In the first place, I can't bear the thought of leaving that girl to her fate in their midst. Prairie Paul is making himself known and feared by the prompt and invincible cruelty with which he acts. He smashes everything before him."

"So far, I have heard of his taking only three prisoners, and none of them was a woman—until the present case. Of those taken, all were mercilessly shot. I believe he expected to obtain ransom in the cases of two of them, but found that there was no one to pay for their lives."

"It seems to be his policy to terrorize the whole country over which he roams. He thinks that he can make his very name feared so that he can rule the isolated settlements and mining camps as if he owned them, and make them pay toll for the privilege of existing within the bounds of his domain."

What Buffalo Bill said seemed to fit the case exactly. A band of outlaws is formidable only through the quality of its leader. He bears the same relation to his men that a general does to an army. A poor general may lead the flower of a nation's army to disaster and death.

Buffalo Bill had downed many a lawless leader in his career, and in nearly every case he had found that the death or capture of such a leader as Prairie Paul meant the annihilation of the organization.

Here he was almost face to face with the rising young leader of the most powerful band of outlaws that had been organized in that locality for some time.

That leader was disguised as an Indian, and, although he was surrounded by the members of his band only, so

far as he knew he seemed to be careful to maintain the character which he was acting.

As Buffalo Bill observed him closely, it seemed to him that there were one or two tricks of motion which were familiar. But when Prairie Paul spoke it was in a deep tone, which was either disguised, or else wholly unfamiliar to the scout.

Cody could have made absolutely sure of killing the leader of the Prairie Pirates by a single quick shot, and he felt almost justified in taking the advantage, even though it was to shoot from ambush, contrary to his sense of honor. But there was another consideration. With the prisoner among them, the chances were that the killing of their leader would be instantly avenged by some of the members of the band in the death of the girl who was in their power. Besides, it would precipitate a fight in which every advantage would lie with the stronger party.

Buffalo Bill could have escaped alone, but the chances were against Ross and Hallam, as well as Bertha. That would be too dear a price to pay for the chance of wiping out Prairie Paul, the pirate of the plains, and the scout considered it only for an instant. Then he looked to see if the prisoner was in sight.

He judged that she was concealed at the farther side of the encampment, and he crept cautiously around in that direction. In doing so, he was obliged to pass close to the bank of the river.

One of the pirates was posted close to the stream, evidently watching the surface of the stream, or possibly on the lookout for a demonstration from the other side, where they had reason to think enemies might be watching them.

In trying to avoid the sentinel, Buffalo Bill was obliged to step upon the very edge of the river bank, which was shelving, and gave way under his foot.

One of the outlaws' boats was drawn close up under the overhanging bank of shrubby turf.

Buffalo Bill sprang, to avoid splashing into the river, and so landed squarely in the boat.

The other boats were drawn up alongside of it.

Of course he made some noise, and the attention of the sentinel was attracted.

The man saw the form of Buffalo Bill in the boat, and for the instant, in the gloom he assumed that it was one of the outlaws. But his wits soon came to him, and he bent forward to get a surer look at the one in the boat.

The scout had drawn his knife as he did not want to fire pistol or rifle if he could avoid it, for that would precipitate the whole gang upon him, and he would have a close call to pull out of the game with his life.

But he knew another trick.

The man on the river bank was beyond the reach of his arm. But he drew back, the knife held in his hand by the blade.

He flung the weapon with terrible force and accuracy at the breast of his enemy.

CHAPTER VII.

A WILD STRUGGLE.

The knife went true, and the blade deeply pierced the breast of the bandit. But death by steel or lead is seldom so instantaneous that the victim may not utter an expiring cry, and a wail of death agony broke upon the air with all its terrible intonations.

The surface of the broad river seemed to catch the voice and send up a moaning echo.

The prairie bandit plunged off the bank and fell into the boat that lay next to that in which the scout was standing.

Altogether, there was noise enough made to have aroused the whole gang, had every man of them been asleep at that moment.

"It is my present run of luck!" muttered Buffalo Bill.

He heard answering shouts from the gang, and mingled with them the voice of Prairie Paul, the leader, was giving out a terse command.

"I reckon they've got me, spite of any human kick!" thought the scout.

It seemed to him that there was no way of beating the run of luck which had started against him.

He sprang ashore, for there was no chance to shield

himself from a shower of bullets on the surface of the river.

But in obtaining a footing, he struck his shoulder against a small tree.

The slender trunk bent and recoiled like a spring of steel, and, on the unstable bank, which bent under his weight, the scout was thrown backward, and he had to spring again into the boat, or fall into the water as an alternative.

"Luck!" he breathed, and shut his teeth hard, with the determination to overcome what seemed to be a persistent chain of circumstances all running against him.

His brain was aflame with the flood of projects which rushed upon him. Only one seemed to contain a glimmer of hope of any measure of success, even temporary.

The two boats, one containing a living man, the other the still quivering corpse of the outlaw, were side by side.

The scout reached over and raised the body of his dead foe up, bracing it in a semisitting posture in the stern of the boat.

Then he gave the craft a push that sent it out several yards into the stream. The slow current of the river caught the boat and bore it steadily down the stream.

The nearly upright body of the dead outlaw was visible from the shore, but so indistinctly that its identity or condition could not have been distinguished in the gloom.

At the same time Buffalo Bill pushed the boat in which he was at the moment up the stream, so close to the shore that it could not be seen by the men on the bank as they rushed down to ascertain what had happened.

At that point there was really no downstream current, there being, instead, a sluggish eddy that assisted the scout in propelling the boat in the desired direction without making it necessary to greatly disturb the surface with paddle or oar.

He had not pushed the craft three boat lengths before he heard the outlaws rushing down to the brink of the stream.

A moment later there was a sputter of rifle shots and the whine of bullets as they sipped across the water in the direction of the boat containing the dead outlaw.

The stratagem had worked, so far, at least.

They had mistaken the boat containing the dead bandit for the object of their search, and the impact of fully a dozen bullets in the inanimate body caused it to pitch over sidewise, so as to lean face outward over the gun-whale.

A shout of exultation from the Prairie Pirates told that they thought they had finished the unknown foe.

But there was another problem on their hands, and the fact that they discovered no trace of the man whom they had left on guard was enough to excite their suspicions.

They did not suspect, however, that they had been riddling the dead body of their comrade with bullets when they thought they were disposing of their unknown enemy.

They immediately set about making more careful investigations. In these their leader, still in the guise of an Indian, took the leading part.

He exclaimed almost instantly:

"There are two of the boats gone, and there is blood here on the edge of the river bank. Clancy is dead. The boat we just saw going down with the current didn't contain our enemy. You idiots! You wasted your lead in the dead body of Clancy himself!"

So much for the quick insight of the leader.

He did not take time to deride their blunder, however, as some would have done.

"Man the rest of the boats instantly!" he ordered.

They obeyed. Even while they were about it, he had another command ready.

"A dozen of you go up the river along the shore—scout every yard of the way. The same number go down the stream. Let another dozen mount horses and make a search out on the open prairie.

"Be lively, and if you see anything alive give it the lead. Don't take any chances. Better to kill a friend than to let an enemy escape. The quickest way of doing a thing, in a case like this, is the best way."

These commands were all spoken loud enough for Buffalo Bill to hear, and he knew that discovery for him was almost a dead certainty, but it was not of that that

he thought then. He had been face to face with such odds before.

He had been captured by desperate men, both red and white, with a lawless death sentence hanging over him. He might have to face the same ordeal again at this time.

The border king was not thinking of his own danger at this time. He well knew that the peril to Ross and Hallam, as well as to the wife of the latter, and also to Bertha, already a prisoner in the hands of the outlaws, was even greater than his own, for they were not so capable of managing for themselves as he was. Therefore, it was the thought of the others that nerved him to a greater effort than he could have put forth for himself.

He knew that he could not long remain concealed, now that the enemy were leaping into boats, rushing through the timber, and mounting to ride over the plain, all at the same time.

It was now a matter of making the best time possible in putting distance between himself and his foes, and at the same time getting back to his companions.

A few quick strokes with the paddle carried him around a short bend in the river, and placed a jutting patch of land between himself and the Prairie Pirates. At the same time, he heard the splash of the paddles of those who had started in the search on the water. They were pushing out into the current so that they could get a view of the stream close up under the shelving banks.

He shoved the nose of his boat up against the muddy shore, and was on the point of leaping out, when a hand reached out of the darkness and caught his right arm.

It was one of the few times in his life when Buffalo Bill was almost at the mercy of the one who had surprised him.

But this time it was another touch of the bad luck he had been having for the past few hours.

"Easy, pard; it's Gordon!"

These words were uttered in a husky whisper at the same instant that the hand grasped the arm of Cody.

"Ah! Gordon!" cried Cody, in a low voice. For it was no other than Gordon Lillie, better known as Pawnee Bill.

Even in that critical moment the pair found time to clasp hands with the grip of comrades in peril.

Pawnee Bill was in the boat in which he had come down the river, and he had been hiding close to the bank, waiting for an opening that might never have presented itself.

It was not a time for explanations. For that matter, none was really needed, for Pawnee Bill had been observing the last movements of Buffalo Bill, and he had heard the commands of Prairie Paul as distinctly as had the border king.

He knew just what sort of a fight they were up against.

"Out of the river, or in?"

The question came from the lips of Pawnee Bill.

"In, for the first part of the game. We haven't the whole crew to fight here, and we can keep them guessing longer by sticking to the water until we have played our first trick."

These comments were exchanged in whispers. At the same time they saw the boats of the enemy shooting out toward the middle of the stream.

The two scouts raised their rifles silently, and at the same instant.

Cody's was the repeater, which had but recently come into his possession.

Pawnee Bill's was a double barrel.

Both began to talk, spitting lead and fire out from the pitchy darkness of the short with deadly accuracy.

The sputtering fire, the perfect aim, the yelling of the stricken men, one or more of whom were chosen as marks in each of the boats of the enemy, combined to make a din like that of a battle, and gave the outlaws the impression that they were attacked by more than a dozen men, at least.

But for the angry rallying shouts of Prairie Paul from his station on the shore, the men in the boats would have made a dash for the opposite side of the river, and the others on the shore would probably have abandoned the offensive campaign upon which they had started.

But they had a leader who would never confess defeat while he lived to issue commands or take a hand in the

fray. He led in the dash along the shore toward the point where the boats of the two scouts lay hidden. Under his inspiring commands, twenty of his comrades strove to get ahead of him in the run for the point of danger.

At the same time, his rallying cries forced the men in his boats to face the spurting flame from the scouts' rifle and start a return fire.

A grunt from Pawnee Bill, who dropped his weapon, told that he had been bitten by a bullet in the first volley from the pirates. But the hurt was too insignificant to count him out, and he grabbed the weapon again, and at the same time his companion leaped up, saying:

"Now we are safer in the timber. Some of that lead spattering this way might make us sick!—and there's somebody reckoning on us for their lives!"

They leaped ashore, almost into the faces of a half dozen of the enemy!

CHAPTER VIII.

A CAMPAIGN OF HATE.

To such men as Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill there is hardly such a thing as being taken by surprise. They are trained to be constantly on their guard, and to them the unexpected seldom happens.

In this case, it was the outlaws who were taken off their guard. The two scouts smashed into the bunched enemy, there was a swift clinch, and then two of the outlaws received cracks on the head that made them groggy, and they were whirled into the river.

One of them sank, and drowned almost without a kick. The other did not get ashore until he had battled with the current in a blind fashion, and had nearly collapsed from exhaustion.

While they were battling with the current of the river, the other four who had led in the dash for the stream were stabbed, hammered, and hustled, and finally sent splashing into the stream.

It was all done in such a hurry that the half dozen leaders in the dash were disposed of before the rest of the crowd could come to their assistance.

The two scouts could not have worked more perfectly in unison if they had planned every move in the game beforehand.

Both started on a run amid the shadows of the timber the instant they had disposed of the leaders of the assailing party.

They heard the voice of Prairie Paul among them, and the hands of Buffalo Bill itched to take hold of the man who showed such a gamy disposition. But there was no time for it then. The leader of the Prairie Pirates was surrounded by his friends, and there were others within the sound of his voice, and it could not be hoped that the two scouts would be able to down the whole crew of the pirates in a single fight. There was too much at stake to make a try for it.

Buffalo Bill thought of the splendid horse which he had just purchased of Philip Ross. He feared that some adverse chance might throw the animal into the hands of the outlaws, and this worried him, for he knew that there was likely to be a need of a swift horse in making the rescue of Bertha Hallam in the near future.

"This way!" he muttered, and made a dash toward the spot where he had left Ross and Hallam, with Arrow, the new racer.

In the darkness it was no easy matter for the pirates to keep on the direct track of the scouts.

Neither fugitives nor pursuers could make their best speed at a run under the conditions. As it was, one or two painful collisions with trees resulted from their haste.

At last the edge of the timber was reached, and they could hear the crashing of the underbrush under the feet of the outlaws, who were uncomfortably close in the pursuit.

Buffalo Bill saw Ross, with Hallam and the horses, and made a dash for them, at the same time saying to his companion:

"Jump onto my horse behind me. It won't be for a long chase, and he can carry double easy for a short dash. He has the courage for it."

It was no time to argue. Pawnee Bill knew well enough that Cody's judgment, whether quick or slow, was generally the best for the moment.

Cody was in the saddle, and Pawnee Bill followed, while a swiftly spoken word told Ross and Hallam of the situation.

The sounds of firing and shouting, the sudden approach of the scouts, capped by the leaping of both of the latter onto the back of the young horse, roused Arrow's spirits almost to the point of frenzy.

The young animal made a furious leap, and then sped out onto the prairie with a speed that made him appear to be unconscious of the double burden.

Ross, with his horse, and himself by no means a heavy-weight, could not keep pace with the powerful young animal mounted by the two scouts.

Hallam did not attempt to lead in the race out of the timber and away from the camp of the Prairie Pirates.

Those of the outlaws who were directly in pursuit were not mounted.

It will be remembered, however, that Prairie Paul had given orders for a number of his followers to mount and to scour the prairie.

This order was being obeyed at the same time that Buffalo Bill and his companions were leaving the shelter of the timber belt.

Having heard all the orders of the leader of the Prairie Pirates, Buffalo Bill figured that there would not be more than a dozen of the outlaws left to guard the camp and prisoner.

He hurriedly told Pawnee Bill of his calculation on that point as they were borne at a crazy pace, in a semi-circular course, over the prairie.

The whitish mist, with the absence of moon and even of stars, on account of clouds, made it very dark.

They could not even discern the outlines of the timber long after leaving its boundaries.

"We will get back to the timber below the camp," said Cody, "but not too far away from it. Then we'll try for the final coup for the rescue of the girl."

"You'll do the coopin'," grunted Pawnee Bill, "and I'll try and keep this wild beast of yours from running 'way down to Texas."

"As you please about that. But there is just a chance of there being something on the shoot called for before I get the girl clear."

"Then count me in. Only I don't know what a man can do with this wild zebra of yours if anything happens to really stir him up. He seems to be made mostly of legs and nerves, and the nerves keep the legs going as if they were full of lightning."

Pawnee Bill's comments were a good fit for the antics of Arrow, for the horse seemed to be able to dance a jig and move straight ahead at racing speed at the same time, and carrying double, at that.

Meanwhile Ross had fallen behind in the race.

Hallam had passed him, and was close up to the scouts as the latter drew near to the camp of the outlaws, preparatory to attempting the liberation of Bertha.

Suddenly firing commenced on the edge of the timber, the outlaws having found that their foes had left the shelter of the trees with horses.

The Prairie Pirates could not see either Hallam or the scouts, but they obtained a slight glimpse of Ross, as the outline of something flying through the gloom. And from Prairie Paul came the command to fire upon the flying figure.

Ross heard the whine of a bullet close to his face, and at the same instant his horse pitched forward and fell to the ground, quivering in its death throes. Ross was agile, and struck upon his feet. He sprang to the saddle and snatched the weapons which were attached to it.

The outlaws whose shooting had done the mischief were not mounted, but under the command of Prairie Paul they dashed out toward the spot where they were sure they had seen a horse fall on the prairie.

Then followed some swift maneuvering, in which Ross found more than his match in the craft of the superior numbers who were in pursuit of him.

He fired back at his pursuers several times, but they

threw themselves flat upon the prairie, and he could no longer see anything to fire at.

Then they began shooting at him again, and his only chance lay in dropping to the ground as they had done.

But there was no safety for him then. There were a dozen of the outlaws against him, and they spread out, scrambling toward him through the grass at a rate and from directions of which he had no means of knowing.

For that matter, there seemed to be no use of his attempting to flee. There was as great danger in one direction as another.

Although the young man did not know it then, he was soon to learn that he had more than an ordinary enemy to contend against.

For Prairie Paul, from Bertha Hallam, his prisoner, had learned the name of Ross as a member of the party which she had been accompanying to the mountain mining camp.

And when he had heard that name, the face of Paul, the Prairie Pirate, flushed under the dark daubing of paint which disguised his face.

"Phil Ross across my trail once more!" he had exclaimed, in a low tone. "Good, then! This will turn this expedition into a campaign of hate!"

So the danger of Philip Ross was greater than he even dreamed.

CHAPTER IX.

AT YET CLOSER QUARTERS.

One of the dozen men who, with Prairie Paul, were closing in upon Philip Ross, had all the stealth and movement that belongs to the Indian.

He moved so silently and swiftly through the grass that he soon reached a spot from which he could hear Ross' movements as he tried to move stealthily toward the shelter of the timber.

In an instant the outlaw made a swift spring that carried him to the side of the fugitive.

Ross leaped up, and the two clinched desperately.

As they swayed to and fro in the hand-to-hand combat, the outlaw gave utterance to a signaling shout which told his comrades the direction to take to come to his assistance.

"Go quick, and make sure of the devil—but alive!" commanded Prairie Paul. "Remember," he added, "you must take him alive. I would rather lose one of your lives than his, until I have a chance to show him that, at last, he is down, and doomed to a miserable death, while I live, the final victor in a career in which until now he had always been in the lead."

"Make sure of him, boys, but harm him as little as you can. I have sworn to see Philip Ross die by inches, and now my oath will be fulfilled!"

Ross heard the words, and the voice in which they were uttered sent a strange thrill to his heart.

Could he be mistaken in that voice?

Was it not his old rival in school, in college, in sports, and in the greater prizes of life for which they had competed?

Was this leader of the powerful outlaw organization known as Prairie Paul—in truth, Thede Travis—the graduate from the same Eastern university and who had been in the same class with him?

This was the question that flashed through the whirling brain of Philip Ross as he fought against the powerful ruffian who had attacked him.

There seemed to be no doubt of it.

He knew that Travis had linked his fortune with a small band of outlaws some time before. But not once did he suspect that his classmate had sunk—and risen—to the leadership of a dreaded band of Prairie Pirates, the most powerful in numbers and equipment of any that had been organized in the great Northwest.

The realization nerved him to a yet more desperate effort to overcome his antagonist.

Ross was a well-trained athlete, and for the first time in his life he found that his training for success in college sports might serve to save his life at the hands of a muscular and brutal foe.

He played a wrestling trick that caught his antagonist off his guard. Then he used his skill as a boxer, and landed a terrific blow on the man's jaw.

That sent the ruffian reeling.

Before he could recover himself, Ross had pulled a revolver and fired.

The shot smote the outlaw between the eyes, and the man fell without a groan.

But the others were already upon him.

He wheeled in time to send another shot crashing into the brain of the foremost, but before he could fire again he received a stunning blow from the butt of a revolver, and sank to the earth unconscious.

Prairie Paul leaped upon him as he fell.

He bent over his prisoner and made a quick examination to make sure that he was not hurt seriously. Then he ordered the prisoner to be carried back to their camp.

They had in the crooked chase left the camp farther behind than they supposed.

Before they reached it they were startled by the sounds of firing in the direction of the camp, while shouts were borne faintly to their ears.

The sounds grew fainter yet, ceased, began again, then became more distinct, although they were not so loud as at first.

They arrived at the camp.

A dozen men only stood huddled about the fire, which had been allowed to nearly burn itself out.

The eyes of Prairie Paul swept through the camp, and rested on the place where his other prisoner, Bertha Hallam, had been left barely half an hour before.

An imprecation burst from his lips, and his blazing eyes sought the face of one of the men who had been left to guard the prisoner.

"Birnie!" he exclaimed. "Where is the girl?"

The man quailed under the fierce gaze.

But his voice did not falter as he answered:

"She is gone!"

"Gone?"

"Yes, Captain Paul."

"Where? How?"

"I don't know where. She has been rescued, I reckon."

Prairie Paul—as he will continue to be called, although it is known that such was not his real name—was silent for a minute, and he seemed to be strangely calm—so calm that the men looking into his face trembled.

"Tell me how it happened?" he said, at last, as quietly as though his brain was not aflame with passion.

"First, you know there were only about twenty of us left in the camp," said Birnie.

"Well, go on."

"A few minutes ago we heard a new disturbance out yonder, just outside the camp, on the side next to the river. We had a man posted there as a sentinel. We heard him yell. Three of the men here rushed to see what was the matter. They were met with a storm of lead. Two of them fell, and the rest of us, standing within the glare of the camp fire, made a good mark for the ones who were doing the shooting.

"My first thought was of the danger of losing the prisoner. But the bullets began to fly so thick here that I had to dodge behind a tree.

"The rest of your men here made a dash out after the enemy. I heard one of them, as I supposed, call me by name and say: 'Quick, Birnie, and we have them!'

"The voice sounded like yours, Captain Paul, and I never thought of a trick. I ran to see what was up. I heard running feet, and I followed. I kept on until I reached the river, and then I came up with the rest of the men that you see here now.

"They said that they had followed on in just the same way, expecting each instant to come up with the enemy.

"Then I understood that there was a trick in it all—that the calls to me had been a decoy, and I rushed back here as quick as I could. And here I found that the girl prisoner had been carried off!"

"You weren't knocked down, thrown down, hurt in any way?" questioned Prairie Paul, in the same quiet tone.

"Why, no."

"What were my orders to you before I left the camp?"

"I—I wasn't to leave it, unless actually driven away."

"And if attacked, and there was danger of the prisoner being liberated, what were you to do?"

"Shoot her instantly. But, you see, I thought——"

"You thought your way was better than that of your leader?"

"No, not that."

"That is what it amounted to."

"But any man would have done the same."

"No man who knew the meaning of the word discipline would have disobeyed me in a single particular. Did I name any penalty for disobedience?"

"No."

"It is just as well. I'll name it now. The penalty is death!"

"No, no! For God's sake, not that!"

Out flashed a revolver, the hand of Prairie Paul was raised, the weapon was leveled at Birnie.

Crack!—and up went Birnie's arms, while a death moan gurgled in his throat.

There was a murmur of fierce disapproval from the others in the camp, and there was a movement of the men toward their leader—a movement that was full of threatening.

Prairie Paul wheeled upon them with an imprecation. This time there was a weapon in each hand, and his eyes seemed ablaze with an unquenchable fire.

They fell back, murmuring, but subdued.

The chief of the Prairie Pirates spurned the body of Birnie with his foot.

"Take the carcass and throw it into the river!" he ordered.

And the command was obeyed with an alacrity that showed him to be the complete master of the band.

At this juncture Ross opened his eyes; he had recovered consciousness.

He met the gaze of Prairie Paul, the vindictive eyes seemingly doubly malignant, framed, as they were, in a face painted like an Indian's.

"You—you are Thede Travis?" exclaimed Ross.

"Do I look like him?" the other asked, with a fierce curl of his lips.

"Yes—you look as if you had at last assumed your proper character—that of a savage!"

The words came quickly and with an unexpected boldness from the lips of the prisoner.

"That sort of remark doesn't trouble me in the least. I'm not ashamed of my proper character, although I may say that it is just what you have been the means of making it."

"So you hold me responsible for making a knave of you?"

"By always striving to defeat me, you transformed my whole nature. I became a creature of hatred and bitterness."

"Then you were worse than a fool at the start!"

"You talk in a bolder vein, I reckon, than would be the case if you knew the fate that is in store for you"

At that instant Ross remembered that Bertha Hallam was—as he supposed—a prisoner of Captain Paul's.

The thought made his heart sink, for it seemed to him that there could now be no hope for her escape.

"Ah—Bertha—Miss Hallam—where is she?" he suddenly exclaimed.

"She got away, ye know——" one of the men started to say, when Prairie Paul savagely cut in:

"Shut up!"

"Escaped!—thank God!" cried Ross.

"She will be in my hands again within an hour—perhaps sooner. And she shall see you die the lingering death that I have sworn shall be yours!"

Ross relapsed into silence.

The knowledge that Bertha had been rescued made him, for the time being, almost indifferent to his own fate.

But he was soon to be brought to a more painful realization of his almost hopeless situation.

CHAPTER X.

THE TWO BILLS.

The story of the Prairie Pirate, Birnie, whom the leader had left to guard Bertha Hallam in the camp, gives an inkling of the ruse which the scouts had employed in effecting the rescue of Bertha Hallam.

Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill had entered the timber as intended at a point a little below the encampment of the pirates.

Hallam followed closely, and it was decided that he should take charge of the horses at a safe distance from the camp, as it would not be prudent to risk the crippling of Arrow by a chance shot.

Too much depended upon having a means of rapid flight in case of need—a need which was likely to come.

Pawnee Bill made the first reconnaissance of the camp, reported the number of men who had been left on guard, and the exact location of the prisoner.

On this report Buffalo Bill based his plan, which was simple enough on the surface—that is, if it worked.

But the conditions were of a kind that made any attempt of the sort full of uncertainties.

Buffalo Bill engineered the decoy game, and when the situation was at its most critical stage he carried through the program with a rush.

It is already known how it succeeded.

The first suspicion that Bertha Hallam had that there was an attempt for her rescue under way, she found herself deserted by her guard.

Her ankles were bound together securely, but her arms were free, as, with such a large number of captors, it seemed improbable that she should make any attempt at escape on her own part.

Suddenly some one bent over her in the semigloom, cut the leather thong that confined her feet, and lifted her in his arms as if she were a feather's weight.

As he held her firmly in his arms, a flash from the camp fire lit up his face.

"Oh, Buffalo Bill!" she exclaimed, in a tone that was scarcely more than a whisper.

And for an instant her arms, upthrown, clung around his neck.

Even in the critical danger of the situation, and the call for instant action, Buffalo Bill could not help wondering if the demonstration she had made was all due to gratitude. And at the same time recalled the kiss which she had given him, in the same impulsive way, under similar circumstances.

"She is like a child, I suppose!" he reasoned.

And for the time, at least, he gave the matter no more thought.

But a little later, when he had rejoined Pawnee Bill and Hallam, and arrangements had been made for taking Bertha back to the wagons which belonged to the little gold-hunting party, the scout wondered that she did not ask about Philip Ross, who had certainly appeared to think the world of her.

The truth was, he was wondering what had become of the young man—wondering why he had not come up with them as they reached the timber.

A hurried dash had been made away from the camp of the outlaws for immediate safety. Then they had halted, for a more carefully planned retreat would have to be made, else there would be a great many chances of their meeting a strong party of the enemy.

Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill again bestrode Arrow, while Hallam carried Bertha on his horse.

They did not go far in this way.

"We need more horses, and we must have them," said the border king, pulling up short.

"The Prairie Pirates have a good bunch, just on the edge of the prairie," suggested Pawnee Bill.

"I was thinking of them. Some of them are in use, but not all. And a part of them haven't had anybody on their backs, probably, for a day or two, as they were led by a mounted party that got here a few hours ago."

"Just what we want," said Pawnee Bill.

"Take your pick and stampede the rest."

"That's the wrinkle, Cody. And there won't come a better time than the present for doing it."

They had not far to go, but Bertha, hearing all that was said, understood the risks.

"Have you got to do it, Colonel Cody?" she asked.

"Yes. We can't get away from big odds in a long chase with the horses carrying double."

"Couldn't your friend—Major Lillie—"

"Rather be called Bill," broke in the other scout gruffly.

"Pawnee Bill?"

"That's it."

"Very well, then I will call you Pawnee Bill," said Bertha, smiling at the rugged fellow through the gloom. "I was going to ask if Pawnee Bill couldn't get hold of the horses without your help just as well? Then we could keep together."

This was addressed to Cody.

Pawnee Bill laughed.

"She rather that I be shot trying to get the horses than have you, Cody!" he said.

Then, before Buffalo Bill could answer, the other leaped to the ground, adding:

"It's a better scheme than for both of us to go back. I'll break in on that bunch of horses, all right, and pick out what we want. You take the girl with you, Bill, for your horse can carry her extra weight without knowing it, and easier than Hallam's can."

"Wait here, but be ready to make a break if you hear me let out the yelp of a coyote. Don't worry, but I'll come around all right, horse or no horse!"

The plan was a good one, and Buffalo Bill could object to it only because he preferred to take all the biggest risks himself.

It occurred to him at the same time that, with the night ahead of them, and with more than sixty desperate men, under such a leader as Prairie Paul, sure of trying to recover the prisoner whom they had just liberated, there were plenty of risks wherever he might place himself.

By this time, too, he was concerned about the non-appearance of Ross.

"Go ahead and get the horses—you know good ones when you put your eyes on them," said Buffalo Bill to the other scout.

Pawnee Bill glided away in the darkness.

Cody spoke to Hallam in a low tone:

"Where's Ross?"

"That's what I've been thinking."

"Oh! Was Mr. Ross with you?" Bertha exclaimed.

Buffalo Bill noticed that she showed interest, but, as it seemed to him, there was but the slight evidence of anxiety.

He well understood that Ross thought the world of this girl, but whether or not the great scout was pleased or disappointed at her apparent indifference, he probably could not himself have explained.

There was considerable suspense to Buffalo Bill in waiting for the outcome of Pawnee Bill's raid on the outlaw's horses.

By this time the rescue of Bertha Hallam must have been discovered by them, and the chances were that they would be more keenly than ever on their guard.

This might make it more difficult to capture any of the horses, or even to stampede them, as planned.

As a matter of fact, Pawnee Bill approached the horses just after the return of Prairie Paul to the camp with his new prisoner.

Pawnee Bill knew that there was some new cause of commotion in the enemy's camp, and he approached as close as he could to listen and observe.

He was a witness of the killing of Birnie by the leader, and at the same time he discovered that they had another prisoner.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER RUSE, AND THE QUEER RESULT.

As an individual, Bunkum Ben, the hobo from Headwater, might not seem of sufficient importance to merit the space of even a part of a chapter to record his adventures.

But he had a part to play which was important to

others, and for that reason he will have to be looked up again.

Buffalo Bill had told him to remain in a place where he had left him, until he—the scout—should return.

In exacting that promise from the fellow, Buffalo Bill had no expectation of remaining on the other side of the river for a great length of time. But, being involved in a complication of adventures, the scout hardly thought of Bunkum Ben again after leaving him, and he would not have taken the trouble to return under the circumstances if he had.

Ben settled himself down to wait with a patience which he would never have displayed had he been required to work steadily for the same length of time. But at last he got tired even of the easy job of lying still and waiting, and it occurred to him that he may have been basely deserted by Buffalo Bill. He was getting hungry; worse than that, he was thirsty, in a way that water would not satisfy.

He would have given his kingdom, such as it was, for a drink of the beverage that inebriates, whether it cheers or not.

Bunkum Ben was a born coward, and his cowardice had been increased by careful and continuous training. He would not have risked his precious life to save a whole nation, or the best friends he had ever had in his career. But to get some of the stuff that he was thirsting after he would have risked anything.

The more he dwelt upon the imagined delights of a swig of liquor, the more it seemed as if he must have it, by desperate means if necessary.

He had no hope of finding enough of spirits in the possession of Buffalo Bill to help him much, even if he could drink the whole of it at one time.

The scout usually carried some liquor with him for an emergency, but as he made little or no use of it himself, he was not the man to do anything toward assuaging the thirst of Bunkum Ben.

But the outlaws—some, if not all of them—would be pretty sure to have what he wanted.

They had given him a ducking, and treated him roughly in other ways, but Ben would forgive all that if he could work them for the stuff he craved.

It was his idea, first, to try to steal it. He was good at that. He had a trick of creeping up on a man when he was asleep and sliding a flask out of his pocket.

He had a skill in that line that would beat that of a professional pickpocket in getting pocketbooks. He could locate a flask easy, and, having located it, he would get hold of it somehow. If he got caught at the trick he was likely to get banged over the head. But the spoil was worth all the risk.

It was getting dark.

He saw that the outlaws on the other side of the river had kindled a fire, and he judged that they would camp for the night.

With his mind wholly on one thing—something to drink—Bunkum Ben crawled down to the boat in which he had crossed the river.

By this time it was dark enough so that he thought he might cross, by running down the stream a short distance, in comparative safety, so far as the chance of discovery was concerned.

He made the crossing in safety, landed where he intended, and then crept toward the camp of the outlaws.

But it all took a deal of time.

Bunkum Ben was slow, and he was more so than ever, because of the necessity for caution.

By this time many of the events which have been recorded had occurred.

Bunkum Ben heard the firing and other sounds of trouble in and beyond the camp of the Prairie Pirates.

But what cared he for the strife of men? Or for their hate and love?

He harbored no hard feelings against any one. His only love was for a well-filled flask, and he plotted no worse sin than that of stealing one, and that only because no easier way of procuring it seemed to be feasible.

As he crept close to the camp he nearly ran against

a sentinel whom Prairie Paul had posted after his return with Ross as his prisoner.

Still Bunkum Bill was lucky, and was not seen or heard.

He skulked around to the other side of the camp—that next to the river.

There he nearly fell over a man lying—or squatting—close to the ground.

The man uttered no outcry, but sprang up and started to run.

Bunkum Ben was so astonished that he blundered right across the path of the other, who fell over him.

The stranger then grappled with Benjamin, found his throat, gripped it, would have squeezed all the breath out of the windpipe, but happened to observe that his antagonist did not seem to be trying to pull any weapons or put up a decent show of fight in any other way.

That touched his curiosity, and he thought he would try and get a look at the face of the rather limp individual whom he was unceremoniously choking to death.

There was light enough for him to make out the face of Ben; at the same time he had noticed that his clothes were somewhat damp.

"I—I'll let ye live if ye won't raise a howl, Bunkum Ben!" the man then said, loosening his grip on the neck of the bum.

"I ain't a-waitin' ter howl," gurgled Ben, "and I don't see what call ye had for choking of me when my throat is dry as a furnace to start with."

"Talk in a whisper, dern ye, or it's all day to both of us," said the other, who, Ben saw, was made up as an Indian, and whom he therefore set down as a member of Prairie Paul's pirate band.

"What aire ye afraid on?" asked Ben, in a wheezy whisper.

"I'll tell ye. I'm one of Prairie Paul's men, and I was left with some of the others to guard his gal prisoner."

"That Buffaler Bill got around here a spell ago and played a trick that fetched a lot of us away from the camp. It was my business to stay right here, with Birnie and one or wo others, and not to git out of sight of the gal."

"But I was fooled, and come pretty nigh bein' killed by Cody to pay for it. He reckons he did kill me. I ain't hurt much, though, and was creepin' back to the camp, when I happens to see Prairie Paul come back, and heard him give Birnie the call-down for not stickin' to his post."

"Ye see, Cody got the gal away while he was wablin' round here in the dark on a wild-goose chase."

"Paul was plug-ugly over the loss of the gal, and what did he do but shoot Birnie dead right in the camp. I seed and heered the whole racket, and thinks I to myself, 'I reckon I ain't goin' to walk up and take the same kind of medicine, not if I knows myself.'"

"And so I was layin' here sort of waitin' for a inspiration fer to do somethin' when along you comes, and I jumped at ye, so's not to be hauled back to the camp, thinkin' you was one of the boys."

"Well, I ain't, and I haven't no notion of givin' of ye away. But, Lord, ye made my throat feel worse than it did afore. I'm jest chokin' to death for a drop of somethin'. And, say, ye ain't got a leetle about yer clo'es, have ye? Jest enough to lubricate the hashness that's up and down the whole length of my wizen?"

"To be sure, Ben," whispered the other, who was known as Solemn Sam, from the extreme length of his features, which were seldom relaxed in anything that approached a smile.

"Ye see, I'm sorter in luck on that score. One of me pards in Paul's crowd, who was with me a little spell ago, got plugged with a bullet when he was right side of me, and dropped close to my feet. I stopped to see if he was dead, and in feelin' of him over, I come across his flask, and durned if it wasn't plumb full."

"Bein' as I found he wouldn't never drink any more on't I took possession. My own bottle happens to be in pretty fair shape, and I'm willin' to be social with ye."

"Thank ye, thank ye!" exclaimed Bunkum Ben, eagerly reaching for the coveted flask.

But the other said:

"Jest wait a bit. This ain't no place for a booze. Feller me."

Solemn Sam cautiously glided nearer to the river, and then followed the stream for a hundred yards.

They came to a little opening, inclosed by the largest trees that grew in the vicinity. Bunkum Ben followed like a hungry dog that had the promise of a meaty bone.

Here Solemn Sam halted and shoved the well-filled flask toward his companion.

Ben seized it and put it to his lips.

But again the other called a halt.

Bunkum fairly groaned in agony of spirit.

"I tell ye I wanted to be social, and ye can't be that unless we drink together," said Solemn Sam, who, as he spoke, produced his own flask.

"Here's yer hair all off and dog's hair on!" was Sam's toast, and Benjamin drank to it heartily.

After that they didn't trouble to think of toasts, either original or otherwise.

It became a race between them, as it seemed, to see which should be first to empty his bottle.

They lounged on the ground in all the luxury of abandonment to their vice, neither of them saying much, partly because their brains were not extra full of brilliant thoughts and partly because talking interfered with drinking.

At the rate they were drinking down the liquor both were soon in a condition to be forgetful of such trifles as trouble and danger.

They became inspired with schemes for success and triumph. Solemn Sam professed indifference for the authority of Prairie Paul, while Bunkum Ben confided his secret ambition to lead a band of desperadoes who should defy the military posts all along the frontier, and become the terror of all the settlements.

He would obtain control of a big slice of the Western Territories and rule them as a sort of king. And Solemn Sam was to be his prime minister.

It was a big scheme, and in his present condition Bunkum Ben felt sure of making it work.

In the midst of these wild dreams of grandeur and power something happened which nipped the whole plot in the bud.

After they got to drinking, Solemn Sam and Bunkum Ben forgot to be cautious.

In fact, they became so puffed up with their sense of invincibility that they did not care if they met Prairie Paul and Buffalo Bill face to face.

By twisting the neck of the chief of the Prairie Pirates they would remove a big stumbling block from their path to glory.

They bragged, and drank, and blundered around in the thicket with increasing recklessness.

Meanwhile Pawnee Bill had taken a look at the camp of the outlaws, located the horses carefully, and picked out the animals he thought would best answer their purpose.

Then he tried the stampede act, and in a trice the whole bunch of horses were squealing and dashing helter-skelter out over the prairie.

By this time several of the men who had been out scouring the timber in quest of the scout rode into the camp.

Prairie Paul, in a rage at the boldness of the enemy, whom it seemed impossible to locate, while they seemed to be everywhere, had no intention of repeating the blunder which had been made by Birnie and the others in leaving the camp momentarily deserted.

He was determined that his last prisoner, Ross, should not have an opportunity to escape.

He ordered a rush to be made to recover the horses.

Once more he commanded his men to shoot at every living man whom they should encounter, unless they were certain that it was a member of their own party.

At first he thought that there must be a considerable number of the enemy, and he had a mind to blow out the brains of Ross to make sure of him.

But he had sworn to recover his other prisoner, and so have his life long enemy tortured to death in her fight.

So, while ordering every man of his gang to redouble their efforts to locate and smash the scouts who were playing so much mischief with them, Prairie Paul stayed at the camp to make sure of guarding his prisoner.

Indeed, that seemed to be the post of the greatest danger at the moment.

It was then, when the fierce and almost invincible leader of the Prairie Pirates grimly stood guard over Ross, alone in the camp, while his men were rushing hither and thither on every side, that Bunkum Ben and Solemn Sam came reeling within the radius of light from the fire.

Bunkum Ben was singing in tones like those of a fog horn.

Prairie Paul wheeled and fired at Ben, but missed him.

And Ben, indifferent to death, lurched so heavily against Paul that both fell to the ground.

Folly succeeded where valor would have surely failed!

CHAPTER XII.

THE DANGER FROM A DESPERATE MAN.

Had Buffalo Bill been certain that Philip Ross was in the hands of Prairie Paul, he would hardly have remained back with Hallam and Bertha while Pawnee Bill went for the horses.

Pawnee Bill discovered the presence of the prisoner in the camp of the outlaws, and it was just like his recklessness to push his plan of stampeding the horses in spite of the new complication.

At the same time he expected, by some bold but as yet unplanned break, to effect the rescue of Ross.

But, to his mind, the important thing was to get possession of horses and at the same time to cripple the enemy for a pursuit, as far as he was able.

For a single individual, where there were a hundred chances against success to one for it, he did marvelously well.

He stampeded the horses all right, and got possession of three of the best in the bunch.

Mounted upon one of these, he made a dash toward the spot where he had left his companions.

He had not counted on any of the mounted outlaws returning in time to take up the direct pursuit.

He was a little alarmed for the entire success of his plans, therefore, when he found fully half a dozen horsemen tearing in pursuit of him like fiends; for he had intended to run the led horses out to where Buffalo Bill could take care of them, and then, while the border king was getting off with Bertha to a safe distance, he would return to the camp of the outlaws by a detour.

He expected to find the camp nearly, if not quite, deserted, and he, in the reckless confidence which was a part of his nature, believed that he would find a way to rush the prisoner out from under the noses of the foe.

Had he had any man except Prairie Paul to deal with, the plan would doubtless have been feasible.

As it was, he found his hands suddenly full with the chase that was hot at his heels, with the rifles beginning to flash and bang along a straggling line that was sweeping toward him at a pace that was quite equal to his own.

It was at this time that Bunkum Ben reeled into the camp of the outlaws, too drunk to be afraid, too blundering to have made a stand-up fight with a ten-year-old boy, yet just blind and reckless enough to dare what no man in his senses would have dared.

Prairie Paul recognized the man, and his condition.

Cruel and merciless as he was, he did not think of using the same desperate means against his involuntary assailant that he could have done against one who knew what he was doing.

Therefore he strove to throw off the weight of the lurching form of Bunkum Ben by mere strength of arm, without resorting to the use of a weapon of any kind.

Before he could succeed in this attempt Solemn Sam arrived and took a hand in the game.

On the whole, he was in not quite so stupid a condition as was his companion. The sight of Prairie Paul

in that predicament, evidently at a disadvantage for the moment, dulled Sam's natural fear of the leader.

It seemed to his befogged brain that here was a chance at last to get the upper hand of the one who had ruled his followers with a will and hand of iron.

Without waiting to figure longer on the case, Sam made a plunge to the aid of the blindly, clumsily fighting Ben.

The next moment Prairie Paul found himself laboring to throw off two assailants who were holding him down with a total weight which was nearly three times that of his own.

Then it occurred to the leader of the Prairie Pirates that there might be something more than a boozy blunder in the attack, and he set about ridding himself of his assailants.

A flash of light from the camp fire showed him the face of Solemn Sam so distinctly that he recognized the man.

"You devil!" he grated. "So you are playing the traitor! That explains how my prisoner got away so easy. It couldn't have been if my own men had kept up to their orders and stuck to their post."

It is doubtful if either Sam or Ben really understood a word that came from the hard-breathing chief of the Prairie Pirates.

All they were conscious of was an increased activity in the man's resistance.

Then both fought with a kind of blind desperation.

The hand of Prairie Paul sought and found the throat of Bunkum Ben, and he sought to choke him into submission.

The hurt served to temporarily lift the mist of intoxication from the senses of Ben, and his next efforts had a more definite aim.

At the same time Sam felt the prick of a knife, which Paul had managed to draw from his sheath.

That had a similar sobering effect on him, and, being well provided with knives and pistols, Solemn Sam dimly realized that it was up to him to make use of some of them if he cared to come out of the scrimmage alive. Then Prairie Paul realized that it had become a fight for his very life.

Philip Ross had been lying helplessly bound on the edge of the opening, just where he had been deposited when first brought in a prisoner.

The strange fight had begun right at his side, for Paul had been standing over him at the very moment that Bunkum Ben had reeled into the camp and lurched against the outlaw.

The moment that Ross realized that the outlaw chieftain was in actual danger of defeat, a wild hope was born in the young man's breast—a hope of escape.

He knew well enough that the struggle was not really being made in his behalf; he knew by the appearance that it was all an audacious drunken blunder; at the same time he knew that such a blunder might prove his own salvation.

For the first time he tried his bonds to see if he could loosen them.

He had known that it was useless to make such a trial before, since he would probably have been instantly shot had he so much as gotten an arm free.

Now he strained at his bonds with all the desperation that a hope of escape could lend.

He found them less secure than he had anticipated.

The thongs were damp, and they stretched. His hands were very small and slender, yet remarkably muscular withal.

In a moment, to his unspeakable delight, he found that he had slipped one of his hands free.

He had a small pocketknife which had not been taken away from him, and this he now managed to get out and open the blade.

To cut the thongs binding his ankles was the work of an instant.

Then he rose to his feet, slowly expanding his cramped muscles.

As he did so a hoarse cry burst from the lips of Prairie Paul.

It was not elicited by physical pain, but the sight of his mortal enemy free again.

The sight seemed to give him the strength of a dozen men. The hand on the throat of Bunkum Ben closed with such terrific force that the bum wilted under the grip.

At the same time Solemn Sam felt the horrid sting of a knife in his side, and his strength went out of him all in an instant.

Bunkum Ben and Solemn Sam were cast aside like two dummies, and up sprang the one who, as Thede Travis, had been the lifelong enemy of Philip Ross.

The latter was unarmed save for the pocketknife with which he had freed his limbs. He knew that, in that condition, he would be no match for the outlaw, who had for a year or two been trained in desperate conflicts, and hardened by the wild life of mountain and plain.

"It is death for me to fall into his hands again now—he would plunge his knife to the hilt in my heart if it came to a grapple!"

Such was the conviction of Ross. And, with the consciousness of real danger, rather than of fear, the young man bounded away from the spot with a desperate man at his heels.

CHAPTER XIII.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

There were two chases going on at about the same time.

Pawnee Bill had more than half a score of Prairie Paul's mounted men racing after him, and they were so close that he expected every moment that they would open fire on him.

The darkness, that made him an indistinct figure flying before them, was all that withheld their fire.

To confuse them the more, he lay as close as he could to the back of his horse, and in the gloom he knew that it must be impossible for the pursuers to distinguish the mounted horse from the unmounted ones.

Besides, having stampeded the other animals, these were also running into all directions.

In consequence of the confusion resulting from these conditions the pursuers did not care to do much shooting which was likely to result in the killing of their own horses.

So much Pawnee Bill figured on as being favorable.

While he had a headlong, and often reckless, way of putting things through, which was liable at times to result to his own disadvantage as well as that of his friends, yet he was quick enough to see all the chances in the game he was playing.

Usually he was far more cautious in behalf of others than he was of himself.

So in the present case, when he realized that he had precipitated a chase in which he was likely to be the loser before it was over, his first thought was that his own carelessness must not draw his friends into the trouble.

"Cody would be willing to take an even hand with me in the game, even if he knew it was going against us," was his thought. "But he wouldn't want to draw the girl and her adopted father into it. I wonder how I'll get the horses to them and not drag the devils that are chasing me too close to 'em?"

There seemed to be only one thing to do.

He had started a bold play. Now, to make it win, he must put it through on the same lines.

He spurred on the horse he was riding, and at the same time slapped and yelled at the other horses as if he had gone insane.

It was a trick that set the horses nearly crazy, and what speed there was in them they made use of.

There was a spurt made that increased his lead over the pursuers, and as a result he got nearly beyond the range of their vision in the darkness.

He took advantage of the chance to change his course so as to ride straight for the place where he had left Buffalo Bill and his companions.

In another moment he swung around to where the border king was waiting.

"Here are the horses, Cody! Shove the girl on this one—it's the best of the bunch—and I'll drop on another. Quick, Bill—"

Before the last injunction was fairly out of his mouth, Cody was carrying it into execution.

Bertha Hallam could ride in any saddle, or with none. She was on the back of the horse from which Pawnee Bill had dismounted in a flash.

Pawnee Bill sprang upon another, and bent his lips close to the ear of Buffalo Bill.

"They're after me like blue death!" he said. "So, if you would save the girl, streak it!"

"And you?"

"I'll take this other horse and lead 'em off your track. When you've had time to get a good distance from 'em I'll try and shake 'em off my trail. But it'll be a hurry-up game to the finish. Where'll we meet—if we do meet?"

Buffalo Bill named a bend of the river, where they would meet on the morrow, provided that chance did not throw them together before the hour which he designated.

"But I don't go far until I've made sure that Ross is safe—or the other thing!" said Cody, in a low voice.

"I reckon it'll be the other thing!" muttered Pawnee Bill.

The thunder of the hoofs of the pursuers now became audible, and Cody wheeled, with a jerk at the bridle of Bertha's horse, and a call to Hallam.

"Toward the wagons," was his low command.

Arrow led the way. The others—except Pawnee Bill—followed close.

Pawnee Bill was off in another direction—one that would carry him back so as to cross the track in front of his pursuers.

He kept on until the latter were once more quite plainly visible. Then up went his rifle and a shot flew back at the outlaws.

More by luck than skill, for he hardly tried, he emptied a saddle. Then he yelled his defiance, swung his rifle aloft, and rode recklessly onward in plain sight of the pursuing crowd.

They answered his shouts, but still refrained from firing.

It looked as if they counted on taking him alive. In any case, they tore over the prairie at a pace that was merciless to the horses, which were already getting winded by the mad race.

The good judgment of Pawnee Bill in choosing the horses served him well, for it soon appeared that the one he was riding was the superior of any of those in the pursuit.

Besides, the animals in the bunch from which he had made his selection had not been ridden at all for more than twenty-four hours, and were, therefore, in a much fresher condition than were those mounted by the outlaws.

For this reason Pawnee Bill soon demonstrated that he held the advantage in the race.

But that was not an unmixed gain.

As soon as it became evident that they could not out-race him, they determined that he should not escape with his life.

And, outnumbering him so heavily, it made a black outlook for the brave scout.

He thought of it the moment he became sure that he was gaining in the race.

"I won't wait for them to open the jig, when I know there's bound to be one!" he muttered.

Without slackening his pace, he turned in his saddle and sent back two deadly shots at the bunch of pursuing horsemen.

One emptied a saddle; the other caused a rider to reel, nearly fall, and then whirl his horse and ride off in a direction at right angles to the one he had been taking, while yell after yell of horrible pain came from his lips.

The instant Pawnee Bill had fired these shots he flung himself flat on the neck of his horse.

He did this none too soon.

A sputter of rifle reports, spurts of flame, and the

whistle of bullets, accompanied by yells of vengeance, rang in the ears of the scout.

His horse uttered a scream of pain and leaped in the air, then raced ahead again with a speed much greater than he had made before.

"Hit!" muttered Pawnee Bill. "And I'll soon know whether the hurt is going to tell against the beast, or not!"

He slipped a fresh cartridge into his rifle, and rose in his saddle long enough to shoot again.

But this time the range was longer, and he could only dimly see the pursuing foe, as the spurt of speed on the part of the horse he was riding made a decided gain for him in the race.

He could not see that he had done any damage the second time he fired.

At that moment his horse stumbled, then dropped into an unsteady, wabbling trot.

"He's bleeding, and it's all over with the race! It has got to be just a case of pure shoot!"

Even as he spoke the horse stumbled again and nearly fell. Pawnee Bill leaped to the ground, and then the horse lurched and dropped upon the prairie.

Pawnee Bill flung himself flat in the prairie grass, partly shielded by the body of the horse, and waited for his foes with a pistol in each hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ESCAPE.

Pop—pop, poppety pop! sounded the revolvers of Pawnee Bill as the Prairie Pirates again came in sight, riding toward him with the fury of a cyclone.

With both him and the horse flat on the ground, the pursuers had no suspicion that they were so close to him until that sheet of deadly flame leaped up at them.

Three saddles were emptied at once, and the survivors wheeled to flee in a panic, without pausing to try even a shot at the spot from which the deadly hail of lead proceeded.

Pop—pop, poppety pop! barked the little guns as the enemy was in full flight. And two more saddles were emptied, although the marksman could hardly see the trace of anything to shoot at. Indeed, he was shooting at the yells, rather than at the shadowy forms, which might be only unmounted horses for all that he could tell.

Pawnee Bill got up and stretched himself, then filled the empty chambers of his weapons, and finally started to walk back toward the wagons of the Hallam party, which had been bound for the camp at Headwater.

He knew that he had pursued a somewhat circuitous course in his flight, and he judged that he might not be so very far away from the miners' camp.

Meanwhile, how fared Philip Ross, who was running for his life with his deadly enemy, Prairie Paul, almost at his heels?

Had Ross possessed a single weapon with which to make a fight he would not have turned his back on the foe, even though he was aware that the training of the outlaw probably made the latter the more skillful in the use of either pistols or knives, if not in the minor arts of self-defense.

But as it was, Ross knew that he would not stand a chance of pulling out of such a conflict with his life.

Yet it was intensely galling to his spirit to be running away from this man over whom he had formerly triumphed in more than one match of muscle in wrestling and boxing.

Yet there had been another sport in which Ross had beaten Travis in the days when they were in an academy together.

This was in running.

He now bent all his energies toward again proving that he was the superior of his old rival in that accomplishment.

He soon proved that he had lost nothing of his ability as a runner.

On the other hand, Prairie Paul showed that his experience in the saddle had been at the expense of speed with his own legs.

He realized the fact almost at the start, and, while

he was reluctant to give up the luxury of seeing his enemy suffer a slow death, he decided that he would have to drop him with a bullet or lose him altogether.

"I'll cripple him, and so have him in my power again!" he muttered.

Ross was momentarily expecting a shot from his pursuer after he was sure that he was gaining on the run.

His wits were lively for a ruse by which he might get the advantage.

He decided to gain the shelter of the timber out of which he had been obliged to run to get his start, as the other had been so close up to him in the beginning.

Now he pretended to stumble, and then to limp, while he turned toward the timber.

The ruse deceived Prairie Paul, who found himself gaining slightly on the fugitive.

Believing that he might have the pleasure of recapturing his enemy without crippling him with a shot before doing so, the leader of the Prairie Pirates refrained from firing.

This was what Ross desired. It enabled him to reach the shelter of the timber, and the instant that he did so he darted ahead again with a tremendous spurt of speed.

Crack! barked a weapon in the hand of Prairie Paul, as he realized that he had been tricked, and that his quarry stood a chance of giving him the slip, after all. The shot came close to Ross' leg. In the next breath he was out of his pursuer's sight among the trees.

He could not now run so fast as he had done on the open prairie; but he had a better advantage, for he could dodge from one direction to another, and by the aid of the shadows and obstructing trees make a much more effective flight.

In five minutes all sounds of pursuit had ceased. At the same time he found himself on the bank of the river.

He discovered one of the boats which had been abandoned by the Prairie Pirates, and getting into it, he paddled cautiously up the stream close to the bank.

He kept on for fully an hour without interruption. Then he went ashore, rested briefly, for he had been constantly exercising for some time, and then pushed through the timber belt, soon emerging onto the open prairie again.

Then he halted and took observations as well as he was able in the uncertain light.

He beheld a number of horsemen riding hither and thither as if they were searching for something. That they were members of the outlaw crew he did not doubt.

Yet he boldly started out across the prairie toward the place where he judged the wagons were left.

Meanwhile events were taking a turn which would bring this train of adventures, which had followed each other so swiftly, to an end.

Buffalo Bill lost very little time in getting Bertha Hallam back to the wagon camp.

They moved so swiftly that Hallam was unable to keep pace with them, and when they came in sight of the wagons, the older man had been left out of sight, although they knew that he was not very far behind.

Then for the first time Bertha broke the silence.

"You have saved me once more, Colonel Cody!" she said, in a low voice.

"Don't count Pawnee Bill out of it," answered the border king.

"I count out no one who deserves to be counted in."

"How about Mr. Ross?" asked the scout.

"He had nothing to do with my rescue."

"No. But he has fallen into the hands of the enemy in trying to find you. And I take it that he will get little mercy unless something is done to get him out of his trouble."

"You think he has fallen into the hands of the Prairie Pirates?"

"Yes. And worse than that, I have a suspicion about this same Prairie Paul which didn't occur to me before. To break up that crew of Prairie Pirates is my mission to this vicinity at this time."

"I find that Prairie Paul, under that title, always ap-

pears in some sort of a disguise. He seems to wish to maintain his real identity a secret."

"I have learned that Thede Travis, a former college mate of Philip Ross, and a bitter rival and enemy to him, has been recruiting the Prairie Pirate band."

"A mystery has obscured the real name of the leader from the first. I have worked on it almost without a clue. Now I more than half suspect that Prairie Paul is no other than Travis himself. In that case Philip is in a pretty bad fix if he is in that man's power."

Bertha drew a quick breath.

"I have heard Mr. Ross speak of that man," she said. "As you say, if what you suspect is true, then your friend, Mr. Ross, is in deadly peril."

"My friend?" repeated Buffalo Bill. "Isn't he your friend, also?"

"Why, of course. I like Mr. Ross."

"And is that all, Bertha?"

"That is all."

"I am older than you, so you will pardon my asking such a question, especially as I hope that you count me as your friend."

"You—you are my best friend, Buffalo Bill. I don't think anybody else will ever seem—seem nearer than you!"

Her voice was low and tremulous.

Just then they arrived at the wagon camp, and Buffalo Bill took her hand as she sprang to the ground.

For a moment her small hand clung to his, as if she would have liked never to let go. Then the great scout again mounted Arrow, saying:

"I'm going to see what can be done for your friend Philip Ross, Bertha."

Then he rode swiftly away across the prairie.

CHAPTER XV.

RIGHT CONQUERS.

Half an hour after the departure of Buffalo Bill from the wagon camp he was cutting in and out of the timber belt in an effort to dodge the Prairie Pirates, who seemed to be swarming everywhere, while he was likewise endeavoring to discover some signs to tell of the fate of Philip Ross.

"He's a grand, brave, bright fellow, whether there is a love chance for him with Bertha Hallam or not," was the thought of the great scout.

As it happened, there was another searching for Ross at the same time, even more eagerly than was the scout.

The eagerness of one was that of the love of one brave man for another, while the quest of the other was actuated by the passion of hate.

Prairie Paul, believing that Ross would return to the open prairie again as soon as he thought his pursuer had been thrown off his track, was patrolling the outer edge of the timber belt, mounted on his best horse, bent upon cutting off the fugitive's escape.

In his search he observed Buffalo Bill, and, with the assistance of his night glass, recognized the scout.

"He is the one man in the world I have reason to fear!" hissed Prairie Paul.

At the same time there sprang up in his breast a fierce resolve to wipe this one peril out before the present opportunity should pass.

Soon after he lost sight of the scout, and the latter, who had also spotted Prairie Paul, had lost sight of him.

Both rode into the edge of the timber at about the same time; each intending to get a glimpse of the other, and to make a dash out at him.

Both with shrewd brains, dauntless courage, and unyielding wills, thus chanced to maneuver so similarly that an unexpected thing happened.

Another horseman had entered the timber, and both the scout and the outlaw leader halted to listen and observe.

Each dismounted, so as to be able to advance more noiselessly.

The third horseman passed on toward the river. Buffalo Bill and Prairie Paul crept forward through the dense shadows.

So they almost stumbled over each other.

There was an instantaneous mutual recognition.

With deadly quickness they closed with each other, and almost for the first time in his life Buffalo Bill found a man with the peculiar skill as a wrestler that could match his own great, perfectly disciplined strength.

To give a description of this singular and thrilling battle of giants would be almost impossible.

No adequate pen picture of such a contest would be possible.

Yet it was speedily proved that the seeming equality of the two men in strength and agility was only temporary, for the younger man, with great possibilities in his superb physique, perhaps as great as Buffalo Bill's had been at the same age, soon showed the lack which only years of experience and hardening could supply.

And, in physical training, it was a lack which would never be made up in the case of Prairie Paul, the chief of the prairie outlaws.

He was soon thrown to the ground.

Then it became a fight for his life, with the overpowering forces of his adversary pressing him harder every moment.

Knives were drawn, and Buffalo Bill felt the sting of the weapon in the hands of his enemy more than once, although the cuts were comparatively trifling.

On the other hand, the scout was inflicting wound after wound, some of them so deep that it was a wonder that they did not wind up the conflict.

But it was a fight that could not last long.

Suddenly the knife fell from the hands of the chief of the Prairie Pirates, and the latter grew limp in the grasp of the great scout.

Buffalo Bill heard a gurgling gasp, and then Prairie Paul sank back from the grasp of the victor.

"He'll never fight again in this world!" muttered the scout as he leaped to his feet, wiped his knife on some leaves, and returned it to its sheath.

Buffalo Bill struck a light and closely examined the ghastly features of Prairie Paul.

"There isn't a doubt of it!—this is Thede Travis, the life enemy of Phil Ross! What a strange career for a man with the golden promise that he had in life!"

Buffalo Bill hastened back to the outlaws' camp and soon made sure that Ross was not there.

Then he resumed the search of the prairie, and was a little later rewarded by coming upon the young man, who was crouching in the grass as he approached, waiting to see whether it were a friend or a foe who was approaching him.

"Good! My boy, do you know what a load it takes off my heart to find you alive? I had about given you up!" exclaimed the border king, as they clasped hands.

It was the handclasp of two strong-souled men, whose hearts were becoming closer linked in friendship and confidence by the hard and perilous experiences which they were having together.

They rode back to the wagon camp together at a slow pace on Arrow's back. And they found that Pawnee Bill had just arrived ahead of them.

Bertha Hallam greeted Philip with a frank, friendly pleasure, which was not just what the young man might have wished.

If he were ever to win this strangely perverse, yet brave and beautiful girl for a wife, it would not be without a good fight for the prize.

Buffalo Bill did not fear any attack on the wagons now that Prairie Paul had been disposed of.

Without his leadership there was little chance of the Prairie Pirates ever again forming so effective an organization.

It suffices to say that the party reached the camp at Headwater safely, and that Ross and Hallam's party were successful in their mining venture.

Buffalo Bill accompanied them on the rest of the journey, but other duties would not allow him to remain long in the mountain camp.

His next call was to quell more trouble with the redskins.

Pawnee Bill got drawn into the same affair, and he

was not the man to shirk his share of any kind of danger.

We will leave all our friends in the enjoyment of their present success.

As for Bunkum Ben and Solemn Sam, it need only be said that the latter was mortally hurt in the reckless fight with Prairie Paul, while the bum pulled out of it with some bad cuts, with more years and many a booze ahead of him.

THE END.

"Buffalo Bill's Bold Work; or, Pawnee Bill and the River Rovers," the kind of yarn that won't let you eat or sleep until you have finished reading it, will be found in the next issue of this weekly. The muddy Missouri, a stranded steamer, Indians, Pawnee Bill, and last, but not least, Buffalo Bill, king of the border scouts, will make up a combination that will keep the reader guessing until the last line of the last chapter is reached. It is No. 345 and will be out April 19. There will also be an installment of Edward C. Taylor's thrilling serial, and feature news from all parts of the world.

Ted Strong's Surprise;

Or, A Duel in the Clouds.

By EDWARD C. TAYLOR.

(This interesting story began in NEW BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY No. 243. If you have not read the opening chapters get the back numbers which you have missed from your news dealer. If he cannot supply you with them the publishers will do so.)

CHAPTER V—(Continued).

The hounds raised a coyote, which, with characteristic cunning, doubled and filled on them, taking up narrow, rocky draws. To follow him required the most expert horsemanship, but our four young friends stuck to him.

They had ridden many miles before Sunshine, Clay's staghound, ran him down at last; and as she tossed him into the air with a lift of her long nose Ted dispatched him with a shot from his revolver, and cut his ears off as trophies of the chase, which he presented to the courageous girl.

Then they all rode back to meet the party, and every one praised the girl and the young roughriders for their gallant ride.

It was early evening when they all rode back to Cheyenne, and the boys bade Miss Flora farewell and went to their hotel.

Sheriff McAlpine lived in a big stone residence attached to the jail. Just at dusk Flora, who was looking out of the window, saw a young man come up the path and enter the front door. She was quite sure it was Ted Strong, and wondered if he had come to call on her so soon after he had left her. She went to the head of the stairs and heard him in the hall below, talking to the chief deputy sheriff, as her father had not yet returned. He was asking permission to talk to the three train robbers, which request was readily granted by the chief deputy.

Flora, who had great respect for Ted, for she had heard her father's praises of the young roughrider's thief-catching ability, thought he probably wanted to wring a confession from the train robbers, and promptly forgot the incident.

Ten minutes later she went into the jail with a bowl of soup for a sick prisoner, as was her habit, morning and night.

The sick man's cell was in the same tier as those of the train robbers, and in the dim light of the corridor she saw Ted Strong leaning against the bars, talking to Bill Belcher and Dog Nose. He did not observe her, although she had to pass close to him to enter the sick man's cell. In a moment she heard voices in the corridor.

"I'm sorry you're in such a fix, boys," the visitor was saying. The voice was so different from that of Ted Strong, as she had heard it that afternoon, that Flora was

startled. Then she realized that he would be likely to disguise his voice, anyway. So she listened intently, to learn, if possible, what business Ted Strong could have with the three thieves.

"But don't worry," the voice went on; "I'll soon get you out of this. I'll need your services in a day or two. We're going to pull off a big job on the eastbound express from San Francisco. There's a big pot of gold coming in the through safe and we've got to get it."

"We've got to get out of here first," growled one of the robbers. "I don't reckon we'll be much good in a holdup, locked in these yere cells."

"Don't worry," continued the voice smoothly. "There isn't a jail in Wyoming I can't get into or out of. Leave it to me. Now, here's the plot: At two o'clock to-morrow morning the guard is changed. This key will let you out of the cell, and here's a couple of guns. Dog Nose will handle the red pepper. When the guard at the corridor door tries to stop you, throw the pepper in his face and take his keys away. Don't use your guns unless you are compelled to, as it will wake the sheriff who sleeps upstairs. Run through the house and out of the front door. There will be three horses waiting in the side street. Meet me at the cave by the river. Now I've got to go. Follow instructions and keep your eyes peeled, and you'll eat breakfast outside to-morrow."

Flora peeped around the corner of the cell in which she was hiding, and saw him go away. It was Ted Strong's compact and athletic figure; his smooth-shaven, handsome face; his same graceful carriage. But he had changed his khaki uniform for a suit of brown tweed and wore a red handkerchief knotted about his throat.

Flora was frightened; but her strongest feeling was one of detestation for the boy whom she had but an hour earlier so greatly admired. Who would have thought that Ted Strong was not what he had seemed? Who would have believed that he was the consort of thieves, who had been in a conspiracy to give his companions up to arrest and get the reward for capturing them, then furnish them the means to break out of jail?

She hurried back to the house and waited for her father's return, thinking bitterly of Ted Strong.

She heard her father unlock the front door and enter the house, and could scarcely control herself when he entered the room.

"What is the matter, daughter?" asked the sheriff, observing the distress in her face.

"Oh, father," cried the girl, "we have been greatly deceived. Ted Strong is not what he seemed. He is the leader of the train robbers and is planning their escape."

The sheriff laughed. "Don't worry, little girl," he said, patting her fair head. "Of course, that was part of his scheme to capture them. He is a very clever young fellow."

"But you don't understand, father," persisted the girl. "He has given them keys and revolvers and a package of red pepper. He instructed them to make a break for liberty at two o'clock to-morrow morning."

"What are you saying?" asked the sheriff impatiently.

Quickly the girl told her father all she had overheard in the jail corridor, and the sheriff hastily summoned his chief deputy.

"What is this I hear about Ted Strong being here?" asked the sheriff.

"He came about dusk," exclaimed the man, "and said he wanted to have a talk with the prisoners. As he had captured them, I thought you would not object to his seeing them, particularly as he said something about a confession."

"Are you sure it was Ted Strong?" asked the sheriff.

"Sure," replied the deputy. "He was dressed exactly as he was when he brought them in this morning."

The sheriff rose hastily, and, bidding Flora and the deputy wait for him, left the building.

As he walked into the rotunda of the Union Pacific Hotel he saw Ted talking to Bud and Clay, and beckoned to him.

"Mr. Strong," said the sheriff coldly, "I want you to come down to the jail with me. I have something to say to you."

Ted wondered at his changed manner, but followed him out silently.

When they reached the jail the sheriff took him directly upstairs and into the room where his daughter and the deputy waited.

Ted noticed that they looked at him strangely.

"That's him," said the deputy, with a ring of certainty in his voice; and Flora McAlpine nodded her head.

"We'll lock him up," said the sheriff, giving Ted a look of contempt.

"Hold on a minute," said Ted quickly but firmly. "What's all this about?"

"Never mind," answered the sheriff. "You know well enough, I reckon."

"But I don't," said Ted; "and I have the right to know."

Something in Ted's honest voice arrested the sheriff's attention.

"Tell him, father," said the girl.

The sheriff rapidly narrated what Flora had overheard of the plot to release the train robbers. As he listened, a light broke in Ted's face, and he smiled.

"Sheriff," he said, "I have not been out of the hotel since I left you, two hours ago. I see through it all. The fellow who gave my name to the deputy was Cuddy-Paw, the chief of the train-robbing gang, who is my double."

The deputy was staring at him attentively.

"Come to see you again," he said apologetically, "I believe you. He does resemble you a good deal, but there's a difference."

The sheriff apologized for his suspicions, and Flora could hardly restrain tears of mortification at having suspected Ted.

"I begin to see that I'm going to have trouble with that young man," said Ted, laughing. "I began it by impersonating him, and now he almost got me into jail by pretending to be me."

"We'll have to work together, then, in putting him where he will cause no more trouble," the sheriff said.

"I'm with you," answered Ted.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRAIN ROBBERS' ROOST.

As Ted Strong left the sheriff's house to return to the hotel he became aware that he was being followed, or "shadowed," in police parlance.

Cheyenne was a strange mixture of the thoroughly up-to-date Western city and the frontier cattle town, where cowboys, gamblers, and desperadoes mixed and mingled with millionaire ranch owners and bankers. It was any man's town who had money, or its equivalent—gameness—and one was likely to be thrown into strange company there.

Ted lingered before shop windows from time to time, keeping watch out of the corner of his eye for a "shadow," but saw no one likely to rouse his suspicion.

But when he came within a hundred yards of the hotel he was approached by a dilapidated and utterly disreputable tramp, who, with an impudent air, stopped him and said:

"Say, pal, don't we never eat?"

Ted turned and looked at the fellow. He saw a pair of merry blue eyes, half hidden beneath a shock of tangled hair, and a beard that the birds might have built their nests in. For the rest, the tramp was clothed in rags. Noticing Ted's attention, the tramp laughed.

"Ain't got enough old clothes on me frame ter dust a watch with—eh, pal?" he said.

"That makes no difference," said Ted. "Are you hungry?"

"Hungry? Say, am I hungry?" the tramp asked himself. "Why, pal, I'll tell you how hungry I am: I'd chew my way through the side of a battleship if there was a small steak on the other side."

Ted laughed at his extravagance.

"You won't have to do that," he said, looking the tramp in the eye shrewdly. "Battleships are scarce in Wyoming."

"Right ye are, pal—and good fellows, too. If yer want to set 'em up ter a feed, foller me. I know a place where we can sit nice and comfortable and chew the rag while we chew a steak. How's that? Does it strike yer?"

It was now too late for Ted to eat dinner at the hotel with the boys, and the tramp appeared to be a jolly sort

of a fellow. Besides, there was a spice of adventure in eating in tramps' quarters.

"All right," said Ted cheerfully. "We'll have supper together. Jump along. I'll follow."

The sidewalk was crowded with people, and Ted had some difficulty in keeping his disreputable friend in sight. Soon they left the broad, well-lighted streets and took to narrow, dirty alleys, and brought up in a dark court.

Before a door the tramp stopped.

"Are you game?" he snapped.

Ted had thought the supper a moment's diversion, but the tramp's voice bit so viciously that he realized that he was no longer on a ranch, where all was broad and fair, but in the worst quarter of a town, where there were desperate men who took desperate chances. He felt the tramp's hand touch him quickly, and he knew that he had been felt to see if he was armed.

"Of course I'm game," he answered, with a laugh.

The tramp hesitated a moment, with his hand on the latch; but after a searching look into Ted's face he threw open the door and entered a dimly lighted room.

A half dozen tables, bare, except for a few bottles of catsup and pepper sauce, were ranged down both sides of it. A few roughly dressed men sat about them, and an old hag bent over a cookstove at the far end of the room.

Ted and his tramp seated themselves at a table near the door.

"Give us a 'Mulligan,' mother," said the tramp, when the old woman came for their orders.

"What's a 'Mulligan'?" asked Ted.

"When you're hungry it's the finest dish you ever ate," answered the tramp. "If you travel with tramps you can get it to perfection in any country in the world where they grow mutton. Ye'll soon see. But ye couldn't get it as good in Delmonico's, if ye gave twenty dollars a plate for it, as you can in The Roost here."

Ted looked about the place and caught the customers eyeing him closely.

"How do you like it?" asked his newfound friend. There was a twinkle in his blue eyes.

"All right," answered Ted; "but I don't find anything exciting about it."

The tramp was apparently scratching himself, but Ted caught a swift movement of his fingers, and a card fell in front of him, on which he read:

FREDERICK CARUTHERS,
Special Agent,
Wells-Fargo Express Company.

The tramp's calm eyes were gazing into his when he looked up.

"Somewhat unexpected, eh?" he asked. "But it's all in the business. We'll need one another to-night."

The "Mulligan" was served. It was a mutton stew, in which were every species of vegetables and toasted crusts of bread. It was flavored deliciously, and as Ted ate it, to the accompaniment of a bowl of tea, without sugar or cream, he confessed to himself that he had never eaten anything more appetizing.

"Ted Strong," said the tramp, or Special Agent Caruthers, as he had now revealed himself, "you beat me to it on the holdup at Morgan. I was looking for it to take place at Egbert, and was there. If you had not taken charge of it yourself, I might have captured the gang. But it is all right, so long as we have them."

Ted smiled at Caruthers across the table. "It was up to me to save my money, even if I had to steal it myself," he said.

"You're right," answered Caruthers. "But how will you come out with the forty thousand dollars in gold eagles that are on the way from Frisco?"

They were talking in low tones that were almost whispers, closely watched all the while by the men at the other tables.

"The Frisco money!" exclaimed Ted. "What about it?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Caruthers softly. "My boy, it's as good as gone! Those fellows over in the corner, who are so interested in us, are members of the most daring gang of train robbers in the West. I am one of them—apparently. Now you know why I asked you if you were game. You and I are supposed to be Cuddy-Paw and Pittsburgh

Kid, consulting about the coming holdup of the express train on the Union Pacific. They don't know that Cuddy-Paw is either in Omaha or Chicago."

Ted saw the whole thing in an instant, and realized that Caruthers, clever as he was, had left some open spaces in his plan of campaign.

"Cuddy-Paw is in Cheyenne now! He called at the jail this evening and planned the release of the three men whom I brought in," said Ted, as calmly as if he were saying any ordinary phrase that meant nothing important. Meantime he was smiling at Caruthers.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Caruthers. He was greatly disturbed, but he did not cease smiling. "Then he'll be here to-night, sure. I guess we better back out of this as gracefully as possible."

They arose, and Caruthers pulled a silver dollar from his pocket and threw it on the table.

"Here, mother, is the pay for the 'Mulligans'," he said.

They heard a rush of feet without, and the door was flung open and quickly closed again.

"They're after me!" a voice hissed.

A youth stood within the room, his body braced against the door, and in his hand he held a long-barreled revolver. He was listening intently.

Ted was watching him with fascinated curiosity—the curiosity of one who sees for the first time the counterfeit presentment of himself. The boy holding the door was of exactly his size, shape, and build; and as Ted knew himself in the looking-glass, strangely like him in countenance.

It was with a sort of uncanny feeling that he looked at his double.

It was Cuddy-Paw, the young chief of the train robbers, of course, and Ted felt himself growing cold and angry as he looked at this boy who resembled him so much and yet was so unlike.

Apparently there was no pursuit, and Cuddy-Paw lowered his revolver and released his hold on the lock. A look of relief crept into his face as he swung himself around, with a smile.

"I beat 'em to it!" he said.

At that moment he caught sight of Ted, standing coolly erect and watchful.

The two boys stood looking at one another, and then one could see that they were different in spite of their apparent resemblance. But it was a difference in expression mainly. In Ted Strong's face was the courage of honesty and high purpose. Cuddy-Paw's face had an evil look on it and the daring of an utterly reckless nature.

The mob in the place had gathered about Cuddy-Paw and were opposed to Ted and Caruthers, who stood apart expectantly, waiting for the storm to break. They were ten desperate men against two brave ones.

"So this is Ted Strong!" said Cuddy-Paw, with a wicked grin. "You've certainly got yourself into the wrong place this time. Boys, this is the whelp who impersonated me in Omaha and got Bill and Jim and Dog Nose into jail. What ought we to do with them?"

"Give him the third degree," shouted the men.

Ted realized the seriousness of his position, but it would never do to let the train robbers, and especially Cuddy-Paw, know that he felt any anxiety. He knew that the thieves' "third degree" was brutal torture and that those who suffered it usually came out maimed for life, if they survived at all. He told himself that he would not submit to it without a desperate defense, but the odds against him and Caruthers were very great.

Nevertheless he smiled in Cuddy-Paw's face, and said:

"I won't submit to your third degree, Cuddy-Paw. But I'll fight you any way you choose, to see who is the better man. Our quarrel, if there is any, is between ourselves, and these men have nothing to do with it. What do you say?"

"What! Fight you? I guess not," answered Cuddy-Paw. "I'm not taking any chances when I've got a lot of 'rough-and-readys' to do my fighting for me. I guess it's the third degree for you, and we'll give you the whole thing. Get to him boys."

Here Caruthers left his side and joined the other men, saying:

"Well, by gosh, if I didn't think all the time that he was Cuddy-Paw!"

The men started toward Ted, who backed against the wall with his revolvers in his hands. He was prepared to give them all the fight he had in him. Seeing his determination to defend himself, they came on at a slower pace.

"I've got a bolter here for each one of you," said Ted sharply, "and I'd advise you all to stop before I begin to hand them out."

"Rush him!" shouted Cuddy-Paw.

At this moment there was a noise of footsteps on the stairs without.

The men stopped to listen. Then the door shook with the impact of blows.

"Open up, there!" The command was stern and businesslike.

"The police!" whispered Cuddy-Paw, his face paling. "The lights!"

There was a crash on the door. It was being forced.

As the men sprang to extinguish the lights Ted saw Cuddy-Paw glide toward the rear of the room, and followed him.

Cuddy-Paw pulled up a trapdoor in the floor and jumped down. Ted was right behind him, and as he jumped he heard the door crash into the room, broken from its hinges.

He found himself in a narrow tunnel, and heard Cuddy-Paw scurrying along in the dark ahead of him. Now they were on equal terms, and he proposed to capture the young bandit if he could.

As Cuddy-Paw emerged from the tunnel into a dark courtyard he evidently heard Ted, for he stopped to draw his revolver, and as Ted emerged into the yard and he saw who his pursuer was, gave a yell of astonishment and fired point-blank at Ted.

Ted, rushing on, stumbled and fell, just as Cuddy-Paw fired, and this no doubt saved his life. Thinking he had killed Ted, the boy bandit turned and fled, leaped a fence and escaped into the darkness.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DELAYED TRAIN.

"You don't recognize me?"

Ted Strong looked up from his seat in the rotunda of the Union Pacific Hotel to see a young, smooth-faced man, with hand extended, standing over him.

It was an hour after Ted's escape from The Roost. When he returned to the hotel he asked for Bud and Clay, but they had gone out to look for him, the clerk told him, and he was awaiting their return.

Ted sprang to his feet and faced his inquisitor.

"Can't say that I do recognize you," he said, "and yet your eyes are familiar."

"That's about all you saw of me when we met before," said the other.

Suddenly Ted burst out laughing, and shook the hand that was held out to him.

"I know you now. You are Mr. Caruthers, the Wells-Fargo special agent," he said. "You certainly were completely disguised. I never would have known you. How did you get away from the police?"

"After the lights were out, and before the police got in, we slipped through a private door into another cellar, thence to the street."

"Didn't the police get any of them?" asked Ted.

"Not a man," answered Caruthers. "As usual, they were too precipitate. They had the place surrounded, and should have captured the whole gang, as was my intention, but they were too soon. I have been working on the case for months, and had given the chief of police the tip to raid the place when I gave the signal by leaving it. I wanted you to see the den, in order that you might be prepared for what was to follow."

"The holdup of the Frisco express and the theft of my forty thousand dollars, I suppose?" said Ted.

"Rather, say, the attempted holdup and the capture of the robbers," Caruthers answered.

"Oh, I see," said Ted, smiling, for the Wells-Fargo man seemed so very sure of himself after his recent failure. "What is your plan?"

"I received a telegram day before yesterday that the gold consigned to you would leave San Francisco that night. While disguised as a tramp, I got in with the gang

of train robbers at The Roost and learned that they had also been advised of the shipment of the gold, and that they planned to hold up the train at Rock River."

"That was why you wanted to have them all arrested at The Roost in the police raid, eh?" asked Ted.

"True," answered Caruthers. "But that is all off now. I am hired to prevent holdups, but I don't know where to lay my hands on that gang now. It's scattered, but Cuddy-Paw will bring it together in time to stop the train and get the gold."

"That is, they will if we don't prevent them and capture the whole gang," said Ted.

"How will you do it?" asked Caruthers. "A show of force will only scare them off."

"We'll slip quietly up the road, and be in the express car when they stop the train," answered Ted. "I have two men who will go through Hades and high water with me, and who would ask nothing better than a scrap with a gang of train robbers. They are members of the young rough riders. There is no necessity for calling on the police or the sheriff's force. If the gang learns that the authorities are aware of their intentions they surely will change their plans, and hold up the train at some other place, so that we not only will miss capturing them, but will lose the money besides."

"You are right," said Caruthers. "We will go up the road, and come back on the express to-morrow night."

Ted, accompanied by Bud Morgan and Clay Whipple boarded the train the following morning and met Caruthers. They rode to Rawlins, a few stations beyond Rock River, and waited for the down train, and when it passed through there at five o'clock in the evening they boarded it.

As they walked through the chair car they saw Sheriff McAlpine and his daughter. Flora greeted Ted and the other boys warmly, and they all found seats near at hand and chatted merrily with her.

At Allen, a station or two east of Rawlins, the train was delayed, and Ted and Caruthers went out on the platform to ascertain the cause.

The station agent was pounding on the door of the express car and calling to the messenger to open it. A small man with a big black mustache had come to claim a coffin which contained the mortal remains of his brother, who, he said, had recently died in Denver, and whom he was bringing home for burial.

"I know the coffin is in the express car," he said, "for I helped to lift it in, and I want it out. The funeral is to take place in the morning, and we can't get along without the corpse."

"Well, we can't hold this train here any longer," growled the conductor. "We're twenty minutes late as it is. Either get that coffin out right away or I'll pull out with it."

"If you carry that coffin past, I'll sue the railroad company for damages," cried the little man, the tears coursing down his cheeks. He was very nervous and seemed to be greatly worried.

"I guess I'd better telegraph the superintendent for instructions," said the station agent. "It won't do to carry a corpse by—and we've got to find out what's the matter with the express messenger."

"Go ahead, then," said the conductor. "Only hurry."

The little man's anxiety to get the coffin out of the car had excited the sympathy of the passengers. He was sniffing and bemoaning the fact that he could not get his brother's body, and Ted and the boys tried to cheer him up.

"We will not let the train pull out with the coffin," said Ted, "if it can be prevented."

No one except Ted seemed to wonder why the express messenger did not open the door.

The passengers and trainmen began to discuss the mystery of the messenger's strange silence.

"I believe he has dropped dead from heart disease," said one of the passengers, who, suffering from that malady himself, thought every one who was sick had it also.

"Perhaps he has fainted," suggested a woman passenger.

"He may be sick, and, while he hears us and wishes to open the door, cannot do so. We ought to break into the car and find out, so that he can get medical attention," said a man who bore the appearance of being a doctor.

"I'll bet he got out of the car for something at Hanna," said the head brakeman, "and was left behind."

"Elk Creek runs under the track between Hanna and Rawlins," remarked the conductor. "I'm of the opinion that a lone road agent entered the car by means of a duplicate key, knocked the messenger on the head and jumped his body into the creek through the side door as he crossed over the trestle. He could then have put the gold into sacks and entered the smoking car unnoticed, after relocking the express-car door. He may be sitting in there now, knowing all about it, while this train is steadily losing time and I'm being jerked up by the train dispatcher."

While they were still offering possible solutions to the mystery the station agent hurried out, waving a slip of yellow paper.

"The superintendent says we are to break in the car door and see why the messenger doesn't open it," he said. "We are to turn over the coffin to its owner, and if there is anything the matter with the messenger, you are to take charge of the car, Mr. Caruthers, as far as Cheyenne."

The little man now appeared greatly relieved, and skipped around joyously.

The agent brought an iron bar and he and the brakeman succeeded in breaking the car door open. The car was empty, save for the coffin and other express matter. The messenger was not to be found.

Ted, Bud, and Clay helped the little man to carry the coffin from the car and load it into a covered wagon which was backed up against the platform.

"Your brother shore must hev been a pretty big man," said Bud. "This coffin is mighty heavy."

"He was a big man," said the mourner.

After thanking the boys, the little man drove off toward the south with his deceased relative, apparently mightily pleased.

Caruthers found the safe in the express car locked and in good condition. On top of it lay a pile of way bills for the packages to be put off at the various stations. The messenger's business was apparently in good order, but where was he?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EMPTY EXPRESS SAFE.

As Caruthers took charge of the car he remarked to Ted that he guessed the messenger had heard that the train was to be held up along the road, and, being a coward, had fled. At all events, this would be his opinion, he said, until he learned to the contrary, and he left orders with the station agent to telegraph to all section foremen to search the track for the missing man.

Just before the train pulled out, Sheriff McAlpine, his daughter and Bud and Clay strolled up to the car, and Caruthers invited them in to ride to the next station. Then he confided to the sheriff the plot to hold up the train and rob the safe.

"If we're likely to be attacked at Rock River," said the sheriff, "Flora will be safer in the Pullman car."

"But I don't want to go to the Pullman car," cried the girl, her eyes flashing at the prospect of being in a real train holdup. Then she began to coax her father to let her stay.

"I'll help you," she said, "and I'll prove to you that I have as much nerve and can fight as well as a boy. See! I have a revolver as well as you."

She pulled out of her pocket a tiny pearl-handled weapon, such as is sold in department stores for the use of women. It was .22 caliber, and a dainty and beautiful toy.

"Don't point that terrible weepin' in my direction," shouted Bud Morgan, in mock terror. "Let me look at it. Jumpin' sandhills! I recognize it now. It's one of them things they use ter make holes in porous plasters in their drug stores. I reckon it shoots mustard seed, eh, miss?"

Every one laughed except Flora, who took back her tiny revolver, and thrust it in the belt of her red jacket.

"You may laugh all you choose," said she, "but you may find that I'll be a useful member of the party yet."

Under Caruthers' direction the men piled the express matter up in the forward end of the car in a sort of barri-

cade, and as the train whistled for Rock River they hid themselves behind it to await developments—all except Caruthers, who was to impersonate the messenger.

As the train stopped at the water tank it was dark outside. The engine took water and started up again for its run to Laramie. So far nothing had been heard from the train robbers.

As the train swung out of the station yard and hit up a speed of forty miles an hour there was a tap on the door.

"Who's there?" demanded Caruthers.

"The conductor," came the voice. "Let me in."

Caruthers opened the door and five masked men crowded into the car and slammed the door behind them.

"Hands up!" shouted the leader, and Ted, concealed behind a pile of boxes, recognized Cuddy-Paw's voice.

The supposed messenger obediently elevated his hands, and Cuddy-Paw took his bunch of keys from him and unlocked the safe door.

"Now," he said, "get to work to open that treasure box."

"Haven't the combination," said Caruthers.

"Blow her open, boys," said Cuddy-Paw.

One of the bandits produced a bottle of nitroglycerin, while another sprung the inside door of the safe with steel wedges. The nitroglycerin was then poured into the crack and a fuse attached.

"Look out, boys, she's going to bust now," shouted Cuddy-Paw.

There was a dull explosion, and the safe door fell out and the car was filled with yellow smoke.

At that moment the party concealed behind the barricade sprang forward. Ted had marked Cuddy-Paw, and leaped upon him. Bud and Clay jumped for the two men nearest them, and Caruthers and the sheriff took the two remaining bandits. Flora leaped upon the pile of boxes, revolver in hand, and was excitedly watching the event.

The robbers were taken utterly by surprise. But only for a moment. Every one of them was a desperate man, experienced in deeds of villainy, and each held his life lightly. Not one of them but would rather die fighting than to go to the penitentiary, which they knew was a certainty for them if they were captured.

As Ted leaped upon Cuddy-Paw the youthful bandit saw that he had found his match in the young roughrider. But he turned like a panther, and with a swift short-arm blow caught Ted on the side of the head with the barrel of his revolver.

The blow stopped Ted for a moment.

His senses swam and he saw several constellations of varicolored stars dancing before his eyes.

Flora had seen the blow, and, with a gasp of fear, jumped to the floor and rushed to Ted's side.

But the young roughrider had recovered, and he and Cuddy-Paw were locked in a wrestling grip.

The car was full of struggling men, tossing back and forth as the rushing train swung from side to side, swaying along at its top speed.

It was a terrible rough-and-tumble fight, for the attack had been so sudden and unexpected that no one had time to draw or fire his revolver or use his knife.

The big sheriff had his man in a corner, pinioned by the throat, and Bud Morgan was sitting astride of his captive, pounding him into pacification.

Clay Whipple was in a fix. In wrestling with the man he had picked out he had got close to the barricade, and the high pile of boxes had fallen upon them, burying them out of sight.

Ted and Cuddy-Paw were engaged in a terrific struggle. They were so evenly matched in strength that neither seemed to be gaining advantage. Ted had compelled Cuddy-Paw to drop his revolver, and was too busily engaged to get at his own.

Suddenly the train jerked back as the air brakes were put on, and the contestants reeled for a moment. Ted's foot struck the safe door, which lay on the bottom of the car, and he went down, with Cuddy-Paw clinging to him.

Now it was Cuddy-Paw's advantage, for Ted had struck his head in falling. The young leader of the train robbers availed himself of the moment by releasing his hold and drawing his knife. He had forced Ted's head back and

raised the glittering blade to plunge it into the bare throat. Ted saw it descending and closed his eyes.

Suddenly he felt himself released, and sprang up. Cuddy-Paw lay on his back, his head wrapped in a little red jacket.

Flora McAlpine, seeing his danger, had forgotten her pistol, but with feminine wit had thrown her jacket over the train robber's head and jerked him back, and Ted easily secured and disarmed him.

The struggle was now over. All the train robbers were bound and lying in a heap in the end of the car, guarded by Bud and Clay.

"Now let us secure the money," said Caruthers, going to the shattered safe.

"Gone!" he shouted, falling back in astonishment, as the others crowded about.

The safe was empty save for a few papers.

The bags of gold were not there. The train robbers, observing the situation, laughed loudly.

CHAPTER IX.

A RACE IN THE DARK.

A posse of deputy sheriffs met the train as it pulled into the station at Cheyenne and took charge of the prisoners.

In parting with Flora McAlpine, Ted thanked her for saving his life.

"I was glad that I was able to show you that a girl could be of use, even in a battle with bandits," said she, laughing.

"And I hope to be able to show my gratitude in a more substantial manner than with words, should the opportunity offer," answered Ted.

"I'm goin' ter get me a red jacket," said Bud Morgan.

"It beats a forty-four when it comes to capturin' a train robber."

"You hush," said Clay Whipple. "Don't you know that a woman's natural weapons are good clothes an' millinery in any contest with a mere man?"

They all laughed at the events of the evening now that it was all over, but Ted did not soon forget how near he had been to death nor how the keen wit of Flora McAlpine had saved him.

Caruthers accompanied the boys to the hotel to discuss the mystery of the missing messenger and the gold.

"It is my opinion," he said, as they seated themselves in a quiet corner, "that the car was robbed farther west by a gang who compelled the messenger to open the safe. They left the car quietly at one of the small stations, and took the messenger with them, after gagging and binding him. We should be getting telegrams soon from the stations along the line, for I have had trackwalkers sent out to search for him."

Soon the telegrams began to come in from the station agents.

The trackwalkers had not been able to find any trace of the messenger.

The agents at Rawlins, and at Hanna, the first station west of Allen, where the little man with the big black mustache had claimed his brother's coffin, said that the messenger was in his car when the train left those stations, as they had seen and talked with him.

"The situation grows more puzzling with every telegram," said Caruthers. "He was in the car when it left Hanna. When it got to Allen, after a run of almost ten miles, he was missing. He cannot be found anywhere between those stations, which he would, of course, if he had fallen or been thrown from the car. And when the safe was blown open by the train robbers the gold was not to be found. I vow I cannot fathom it."

"It looks ter me ez if he must hev been one of them there magic fellers what makes things disappear right before yer eyes," said Bud. "I seen one o' them onct in a show down in Santa Fe, who got a watch out of eh cow-puncher's pocket an' made it disappear. He wuz run plumb ter Las Vegas before the boys cotched him an' strung him ter a lone pine tree, an' even then they didn't get ther watch. I reckon this yere messenger jest made ther gold disappear outer ther safe, an' then disappeared himself right after it."

"Maybe he's one of those Hindu fakirs," said Clay Whip-

ple. "I've heard tell they can sit right in front o' yo' an' say 'Hocus-pocus-hi-skinnyrinkum!' an' go straight up into the air out o' sight an' stay thar."

"I reckon that's what will become o' the messenger—go straight up inter the air an' stay thar, ef the young roughriders catch him with the gold in his possession," said Bud.

Ted had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes half closed, thinking deeply. The disappearance of the gold and the messenger without leaving the slightest trace to show how they had left or been taken from the car bothered him considerably. He half heard the remarks made by Bud and Clay, and knew that they were not meant seriously.

Caruthers was also thinking. The whole affair did not redound to his credit. He was the express company's detective, and practically impossible things were expected of him. A messenger had just handed him a telegram, and his face clouded with mingled anger and trouble as he read it.

"What do you think of that?" he asked, handing the telegram to Ted. It was from the superintendent of the express company at Omaha, who said that he was greatly disappointed that Caruthers had not solved the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the messenger and the gold, especially as he was on the train at the time. The telegram also said that the company would consider his services in their behalf at an end unless he immediately turned up both.

"The superintendent is unjust," said Ted. "I don't see what else you could have done. I am just as much interested in finding the missing gold as you are, and I propose to help you do it."

"Then I feel sure that we will find it," said Caruthers. "But what are we to do now?"

"Give me time to think it over," said Ted. "I'm going out for a walk."

His feet unconsciously led him toward the county jail. Looking up, he saw lights in the windows of the sheriff's house. Flora McAlpine was sitting in one of them, and Ted quickly crossed the yard and rang the bell. He thought that a talk with the girl might help clear away the confusion that was in his mind.

When he entered the parlor she rose to greet him. "I am glad you came," she said. "I was thinking of the disappearance of the gold and the express messenger, and wanted to talk about it with you."

"That is the very thing that brought me here," said Ted. "I have thought about it so much that my mind is in a muddle."

Together they went over every move made from the time the train reached Allen and the little man came to claim the coffin until the train arrived at Cheyenne.

"I cannot help thinking that Cuddy-Paw was at the bottom of it all," said Ted.

"I do not agree with you," demurred Flora. "Did you notice closely the little man who came to claim the coffin?"

"Yes," said Ted. "After he got away I had an idea that perhaps he was the messenger himself, disguised. You know he was a new man in the service and the agents along the road did not know him very well. I would not be surprised if he was a member of the train-robber gang."

"You're all wrong," laughed Flora. "That was not what I meant. I don't believe he was a man at all."

"What do you mean?" asked Ted, in amazement.

"Did you notice that when 'he' was crying 'he' did not do it like a man?" answered the girl. "I have seen 'he' cry in jail here, and I know how a woman cries. The 'his' feet were too small, and 'he' seemed as if 'he' wanted to hide them all the time. A woman whose feet are always covered with her skirts, would feel that way about them. Then 'he' kept fixing 'his' hat on 'his' head all the time, using both hands. That is a woman's, not a man's way."

Ted laughed.

"There may be something in what you say, but I don't believe he was a man; a little, effeminate, soft-hearted man, though," said Ted. "No, I believe that when we get to the bottom of this thing we will find Cuddy-Paw there or somewhere."

Thus they talked until quite late, arguing back and forth.

at coming to no conclusion, when suddenly strains of music came up to them from the jail yard.

"I wonder what that is?" asked the girl. "If it is a rolling musician, he'd better be moving off, or he'll be rested for playing at such a late hour in front of the jail."

Ted listened a moment, and then broke into a laugh. "I knew the musician."

It was Clay Whipple, who had taken it into his romantic head to serenade the girl.

"I will say good night now," Ted said to Flora, "and on my way out I'll give the fellow your warning."

When he reached the yard he found Clay beneath Flora's window, industriously sawing away at "My Old Kentucky Home," which was his best piece.

"Come away from there," said Ted. "Do you want to spend the rest of the night in a cell in there?"

"Is that the way they receive a serenade out in this country?" asked Clay. "Down in Kentucky they'd invite you in an' treat yo' well."

"They're not so romantic in Wyoming," answered Ted.

They heard a loud laugh on the other side of the wall, and found Bud out there.

"You here, too?" they asked, in astonishment.

"Me, too!" cried Bud, slapping his leg. "Jumpin' sandhills, but ye are always a-beatin' me ter it, Ted. I come ter sing ter the young lady, an' jes' ez I wuz erbout er open my valves an' let ther music out I hears Clay in there a-torturin' the catgut, an' then the door opens an' out you come. That thar gal has shore captured the whole unit."

"Well, let us get away from here now," said Ted.

They were standing beside the stone wall that surrounded the jail yard, and were about to move on when a dark figure slipped around the corner and hurried noiselessly toward them.

Crouching back into the shadow, they waited. The figure started past, running in a crouching position.

Ted grasped Bud's arm.

"Cuddy-Paw," he gasped. "He has escaped. Follow me! No noise now; we must catch him."

They hurried after the escaping train robber, who, when he got beyond the wall, began to run like a deer. The three boys ran, also. They had difficulty in following the ring figure, which went down one street, darted around the corner and out toward the open country.

Behind them they heard the bell of the jail ring out a warning, followed by a fusillade of pistol shots. Evidently there was trouble at the jail. Other prisoners were escaping, also.

On the edge of the town was a big horse barn and corral, and the boys could not see that Cuddy-Paw was fleeing toward it; but while they were still some distance in the dark they saw him leap the fence into the corral, and a moment later come flying out again on the back of a horse.

"After him," cried Ted. "Get horses for yourselves."

He was over the fence with a bound. He caught a horse. It was without a saddle or bridle, but this made no difference to Ted, who could ride bareback and guide a horse with his knees. In a moment or two he heard clapping hoofs behind him, and knew that Bud and Clay were similarly mounted, and were following him. Ahead in the darkness he could hear, but not see, Cuddy-Paw galloping. They chased him for miles in the pitch-dark night, trusting to their horses to find the road. Ted felt his horse giving down beneath him. It was nothing hard and stumbling badly, and he had no reins to hold it up.

When they found themselves in a rocky ravine and met a stone wall, and stopped to listen. They could hear nothing. Cuddy-Paw had given them the slip, and regained his freedom for a time.

CHAPTER X.

MEETING WITH FORTUNE.

Cuddy-Paw's escape from the Cheyenne jail was executed with his usual daring. At midnight, when the guard was changed, he was in the cell with two of his men, and when the new turnkey passed by he beckoned him to the

"I am Ted Strong," he said, "and have been locked in here with these men in order to have a talk with them. I have been trying to get them to tell me what became of the missing express messenger. I wish you would tell the head guard that I am ready to come out."

"That is all right, Mr. Strong," said the turnkey, who knew Ted, and had seen him in the sheriff's house. "The head guard is at supper. I suppose it is all right. I have the keys and can let you out."

He unlocked the cell door and Cuddy-Paw walked out.

Together they went along the corridors, talking about the capture of the train robbers, the guard complimenting Cuddy-Paw, believing him to be Ted, on his clever captures. Cuddy-Paw thanked the guard, and bade him good night at the side door of the jail. Once outside, he ran as fast as he could, and his escape was not discovered until the head guard came up from supper and checked over the prisoners for the night. The alarm was sounded when Cuddy-Paw's absence was detected, but it was then too late for pursuit, although the police were at once instructed to look for him, while a sheriff's posse was detailed to scour the town.

When Cuddy-Paw heard Ted, Bud, and Clay pursuing him, he believed them to be a guard from the jail. He was unarmed, and knew that capture by the jail officials meant severe punishment and solitary confinement where he would never have another opportunity to get away.

But as he rode away into the darkness he laughed to himself at the success of his ruse.

"The fools," he muttered. "They are as easy to deceive as children."

He was riding to one of the "holes-in-the-ground," as his band called their various hiding places, where he expected to find one or more men upon whom he could rely to go in search, once more, of the gold which he had failed to find in the express car.

Ever since he had been locked up in the Cheyenne jail, Cuddy-Paw had been thinking of the lost money. Who had stolen it? He took off his hat to the clever thief, whoever he was, for he had fooled not only Cuddy-Paw, the cleverest express robber, but also Ted Strong, who had proved himself a most expert thief catcher and defender of his own interests. Cuddy-Paw also bowed to Ted Strong, although he hated him for his bravery and honesty as well as his ability, which he was forced to confess was greater than his own. He gave Ted the credit of landing almost his whole force in jail.

"But," thought Cuddy-Paw, "while he is clever, I will prove to him that I am even more clever, for I will get his gold yet. Give me only another chance, two trusty men, and I will do it."

These were his thoughts as he pounded along on a bareback horse in the dark.

For a long time he heard the pursuit, and led it away from the "hole-in-the-ground" by a circuitous route, and into the rocky ravine. He knew the only exit from it, and no one unfamiliar with it could find it in the dark. There he stopped to listen, and, hearing nothings behind him, concluded that his pursuers had grown tired and given up the chase.

The "hole-in-the-ground" to which Cuddy-Paw was traveling was a cave in the bank of Sandy Bottom Creek, a considerable stream which runs southward in a series of little lakes into the Platte River. It afforded many excellent hiding places for desperadoes, and was a favorite rendezvous for cattle thieves and fugitives from justice.

Cuddy-Paw rode rapidly through the rolling hills that lay between Cheyenne and the creek, thinking of his future movements. He was almost at the end of his rope. Most of his men were in jail, and he needed money with which to recruit another gang and equip it with horses and funds for rapid changes of base. He made up his mind to go back to Allen, and discover, if possible, the secret of the disappearance of the express messenger. He believed that the vanishing of the gold was due to another band of robbers. If this was true, he wanted to belong to it and control it, which he had no doubt he could do better than any other.

Suddenly he caught a flickering glare of light in the treetops far in advance.

"Camp fire!" he muttered to himself. "Some of the boys are at home."

As he approached nearer he saw the fire through the trees, and, slipping from the back of his horse, hobbled it with the handkerchief from around his neck.

Then he crept forward slowly and softly. Although he believed that the fire belonged to his friends, yet he was too clever in his business to discover himself until he was certain of his surroundings, particularly as he was unarmed.

A man of large frame stood near the fire. His back was turned to Cuddy-Paw, who thought he recognized one of his men.

"I'll give him the signal," he said to himself, and crept out into the open.

He barked three times like a coyote, then waited a few minutes and barked again.

He saw the man raise his head quickly and look in his direction.

"I believe it's one of the boys," muttered Cuddy-Paw, "but I'll give him the test."

He imitated the long cry of the bittern, and the man leaped to his feet and ran to a covered wagon which stood on the opposite side of the fire and pulled out a Winchester rifle. As he came forward into the firelight again Cuddy-Paw saw that it was a stranger.

"Great Scott! it's not one of us," he gasped, and scurried back into the shelter of the underbrush. "Perhaps he is a deputy sheriff or a marshal."

Walking around through the brush, he got another view of the camp. A small, slender man, who had been behind a clump of bushes, came forward and stood beside the other.

"It's nothing," said the little man. "You needn't be afraid. It was a coyote or some bird down on the creek calling to its mate."

The large man walked beyond the glare of the fire and explored the bushes, poking the muzzle of his rifle almost into Cuddy-Paw's face.

"If I only had a gun he wouldn't do that," muttered the thief.

But, as Cuddy-Paw watched, he saw a thing that fairly made him gasp. The big man sat down beside the fire and began to play with a heap of loose gold coins that lay between his legs on the ground. The chinking noise, as they fell through his fingers when he tossed them up in handfuls and dropped them back into the pile, sounded like music in the ears of the young train robber. He looked on in petrified amazement.

Who was the man? Where did he get so much gold?

Cuddy-Paw crept closer. Now he could see the little man plainly. He sat on the end of a long box, and he, too, was playing with a pile of gold.

The pair appeared mad over the precious metal. They chattered over it as they tossed it about. By the glare of the fire the gold coins flashed, for they were evidently newly coined. The fire leaped up occasionally, playing tricks with Cuddy-Paw's eyes. Now he thought he saw the figures of many men lurking in the shadows. Could it be a trap for him to fall into? If only he had a gun, he thought, he would jump into the camp and clean it out in a minute.

He decided to take a chance of being captured or shot if only he could get into the camp and get a closer view of that gold, and, after making a loud noise with his feet as though he was tramping through the woods, he stood up and stepped into the light, at the same time calling out "Hullo, friends!"

The big man sprang for his rifle again, while the other swept the gold into the box and clapped down the lid.

"Stay where you are, or I'll shoot!" shouted the big man. "What do you want?"

"I'm lost," called Cuddy-Paw, "and I'm tired and cold. Let me come to your fire and rest."

The pair talked in low tones for a moment, and then the big man asked: "Who are you?"

"I'm a cowboy. My horse got hurt down the creek, and I'm on foot, unarmed and tired and hungry from tramping all afternoon and night," answered Cuddy-Paw soothingly.

Again the couple held a long consultation, and the man lowered his rifle.

"All right," he called, "come in to the fire."

As Cuddy-Paw marched boldly up to the camp fire his youth and otherwise innocent appearance evidently made a favorable impression.

"How long have you been about here?" asked the man, narrowly examining him.

Cuddy-Paw, who was an expert at deception, put on a most boyish air, and said that he had just come up, having followed the light of the fire on the trees for some distance.

Now he saw that the little man was no man at all, but a woman masquerading in man's clothes.

Cuddy-Paw was clever enough not to be inquisitive about the affairs of the couple. He was friendly enough, and answered all the questions put to him with apparent frankness, but asked none of them.

He was thinking all the while, however, and laughing within himself at his discovery. The gold he had seen was that taken from the San Francisco express car. But who were the couple, and how did they come by it? This was more than he could answer.

He now had an opportunity to examine the box that held the coin and which had been in the shadow, and saw that it was a coffin.

Cuddy-Paw wanted the money, and wanted it badly; but how was he to get it?

Finally he suggested that they play a game of cards to pass the time away, and from the eagerness with which the man assented, Cuddy-Paw saw that he had a passion for gambling.

Cuddy-Paw was an expert with cards himself, and an adept at all the tricks of cheating, and he had no doubt he could win his opponent's money. At first they played for fun, but the man suggested a small stake to make the game interesting, and, as Cuddy-Paw had no money, loaned him enough to begin on.

The game was poker, and Cuddy-Paw won steadily. Regularly the man would send the woman to the coffin for a new supply of gold pieces, which were promptly won by Cuddy-Paw. The man became desperate, and the stakes went up into the thousands. Still Cuddy-Paw won.

At last the woman went to the coffin and came back white and trembling.

"It is all gone," she said.

Cuddy-Paw was surrounded with piles of gold.

The man put up his rifle, and Cuddy-Paw won it. Then one of the horses went the same way, then the other, and finally the wagon.

"You have cleaned me out," said the big man, bitterly. "Stake me and we will play again."

It was almost morning, and the adventures Cuddy-Paw had been through during the past twenty-four hours had tired him out.

"All right," he said, "but wait until morning. I am tired and want to sleep."

With this the man was compelled to be satisfied. Cuddy-Paw threw his gold into a sack, and, lying down with the rifle at hand and the gold for a pillow, fell into a deep sleep.

He was awakened by the clink of gold, and sprang up, rifle in hand. The man had slit the sack and was stealing the twenty-dollar gold pieces.

"That settles it," said Cuddy-Paw. "I was going to start you fair by giving back some of this, but now I ought to kill you."

The woman fell on her knees and begged for her husband's life, and the boy bandit bound the man hand and foot and dumped him into the wagon.

He then compelled the weeping woman to climb on the seat and drive away.

"If you look back," he said sternly, "I'll put a bullet through each of you."

Just as the sun was coming up, the wagon disappeared over a distant hilltop.

Cuddy-Paw loaded his sack of gold onto the back of his horse and set out for the "Hole-in-the-ground," the cave in the bank of one of the little lakes that compose Sand Bottom Creek.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

New Platinum Fields Opened in Colombia.

Great things are expected in the future of the Choco district of Colombia, which, next to the Ural district, in Russia, contains the world's richest deposit of platinum.

At a recent meeting of stockholders of a British gold and platinum corporation held in London the chairman in reviewing the world situation in the platinum market said:

"Some time previous to the war ninety per cent of the world's output of platinum was produced in Russia, the latter falling off, which was very marked even before the war, being due to the exhaustion of the best known areas in the Urals. We find that in 1911 the Russian production was 300,000 troy ounces. In 1912 it had diminished to 185,381 ounces, in 1913 to 173,642 ounces, and in 1914 to 156,775 ounces. In 1915 the Russian output fell to 107,774 ounces and in 1916 to 78,674 ounces, but no doubt the decline since 1914 has been as much due to the dislocation caused by the war as to the exhaustion of the deposits. However, due attention must be paid to the fact that Mr. de Hautpick, an authority of the Russian imperial government, some years back predicted the exhaustion of the Urals within a period of thirty or forty years, and it is a fact that gravels which were left as unpayable in former years have now been treated, the increase in the price of the metal having made the treatment of these gravels profitable.

"In the case of the Choco district of Colombia we have virgin ground, with steadily increasing, instead of diminishing, production of platinum, the output having been 12,000 ounces in 1911, 15,000 ounces in 1912, 15,000 ounces in 1913, 7,500 ounces in 1914, 18,000 ounces in 1915, 25,000 ounces in 1916, and I understand that in 1917 it went up to some 50,000 troy ounces, showing a gradual increase since 1911, which has now reached 300 per cent, and this, be it remembered—eliminating the production of one dredge—with very crude appliances indeed.

"Careful survey and prospecting carried out by British and American engineers have proved the existence of platinum and gold in payable quantities over many square miles of territory. The natives have gathered rich harvests by their simple and crude methods of washing the gravels in pans or bateas. In order to get at the bed rock, however, where the platinum and gold in the gravels have naturally gravitated, it is necessary to use modern and up-to-date machinery and to deal with the gravels on a commercial scale; and there can be no possible doubt that working on a large scale with such modern machinery the yields will be commensurate. The Colombian fields are really only in their infancy."

Sold Hubby's Savings Bank.

When a junkman stopped at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Love Smiley, near Poeville, Pa., Mrs. Smiley sold him a quantity of junk, among the stuff being a pair of discarded boots belonging to her husband. When

Mr. Smiley came to supper she informed him of what she had done. Smiley was shocked.

He informed his wife that he lost an election bet and was trying to make up his loss by cutting down his tobacco bill; that instead of smoking six cigars a day he had cut them down to three; that every day he deposited thirty cents in the rubber boots.

Smiley declares that as near as he can figure it he had twenty dollars in the boots. He tried to locate the junkman, but could not find him.

No Titles Given to Canadian Civilians.

January, 1919, will stand unique in Canadian history. It is the first New Year's month, at least in modern times, that has not been marked by a wide distribution of titles. Not a single Canadian civilian secures a title in this year's imperial honors list. A couple of judges were made privy councillors, a few others were made C. M. G.'s, and there was a large list of honors—not many titles—for soldiers on active service.

On the principle that the men who have fought can have anything they want, no one criticises the honors for soldiers. If they will be gratified by titles let them have titles. But there is no doubt that much trouble has been avoided by the new policy respecting honors to civilians. An Honors List with a few peerages and a long list of knighthoods and columns of lesser honors would have raised the roof.

The sad feature of the situation is that there are several scores of very estimable gentlemen resident all over Canada who did very useful war work and who, in the ordinary course of events, would have secured decoration and reward direct from the king. Many of them could have posted off to Buckingham Palace to receive a knighthood on a day's notice at any moment for two years past. But as the tide runs now they will never need to make that trip.

Three Hundred and Sixty-five Deer Killed in Jersey This Season.

Fresh venison, to the amount of approximately thirty-five tons, helped relieve the meat shortage in New Jersey as a result of four days' deer shooting, according to reports from wardens compiled by Chief Warden James M. Stratton, of Forked River, N. J.

Under the new law each successful sportsman has to report the killing of his deer. The record is 365 bucks in the brief open season.

The season also was remarkable for the lack of accidents, no reports of men being killed or injured have been received. The wardens believe this is due, first to the law which forbids the killing of any deer except those having horns visible over the hair and to recommendations of the State fish and game commission that all deer shooters wear either red or white hats and coats, both factors having enforced extra caution.

The commission calls attention to the fact that while the excitement of the chase for deer has made the

sport popular with hundreds of New Jersey sportsmen, the fact that more than thirty-five tons of fresh venison was procured at a period when the price of meats was the highest in the country's history has proved an important economic element, largely offsetting any actual losses caused by deer on farm land.

Atlantic County led in the State with the largest bag of game, with 105 deer taken within its boundaries. Burlington County was second, with 77. Fifteen other counties in all reported deer killed, the scores in others being: Bergen, 7; Camden, 1; Cape May, 8; Cumberland, 50; Gloucester, 4; Mercer, 5; Morris, 4; Ocean, 45; Passaic, 6; Salem, 1; Somerset, 1; Sussex, 17, and Warren, 86.

The State's stock herd of deer in the woods on the State game farm at Forked River has increased rapidly, and many animals will be released in barren mountain districts of the State this winter.

League to Increase Negro Women in Industry.

The National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes has been interested during the last year in the opening of the field of industry to negro women. All over the country in industrial centers these women have been tried out, first in one phase of factory work, then in several—always with success, until it seems that they are to become a permanent part of industrial life. The Urban League plans a program for permanent placing of negro women in industry.

Through its branches in the thirty cities the league has worked to obtain increased opportunities for these workers. Reports have been secured of women receiving during the war as much as thirty-five dollars per week.

The league's plans for better housing in industrial centers include a survey of living conditions, followed by the establishment of a room registry which shall meet the need of every class of workers.

The work has been started in New York City by the War Work Council of the Y. W. C. A., which is having a survey made, and means to do the same thing in other industrial centers. Work throughout the country will be started soon.

Daring Surgery Done in Storm at Sea.

Two days out of Brest, on January 6th, Corporal E. O. Williams, of Airlie, N. C., Battery C, Fifty-sixth Coast Artillery, was stricken with appendicitis, aboard the armored cruiser "South Dakota." His condition was so critical that an operation was decided on, though the vessel was being battered by a storm that smashed the upper bridge, injured seven men in the pilot house, and flung many sick and wounded from their bunks.

Captain J. M. Luby stopped the warship. Corporal Williams was placed on an operating table. Lieutenant Commander C. I. Wood, ship's surgeon, and Major B. F. Cressman, surgeon of an aero squadron abroad, were lashed to either side of the table as they started to operate.

Time and again the cruiser rolled and rocked in seas that sometimes broke forty feet high. Frequently the surgeons were in danger of cutting themselves with their instruments or of injuring the patient. At each lurch of the ship, the surgeons and attendants braced

themselves. Then, as the cruiser for a few moments regained her poise, they resumed the operation.

At the end of forty-five minutes, the operation completed, Corporal Williams was rushed to the sick bay. By morning he had begun to improve. When the "South Dakota" docked he was reported to be fretting because he could not walk ashore. However, he was carried in an ambulance to St. Mary's Hospital, Hoboken.

Lloyd George Gets Wilson's Portrait.

President Wilson has presented a souvenir of his recent visit to England to Prime Minister Lloyd George, says the "Daily Telegraph." It is a large three-quarter-length portrait of himself set in a beautiful standing frame of red morocco, and it bears the following inscription in the president's handwriting:

"The Right Honorable D. Lloyd George, with the best wishes of his friend, Woodrow Wilson."

The photograph was taken at Washington.

One Saloon Quits Daily.

St. Louis saloons have been closing at the rate of one a day for a year, official figures show. Lack of business is one cause, while uncertainty as to the future has had much effect.

Yank Corporal Falls Heir to Big Fortune.

Just after Corporal Hollenga sailed for France last year a letter arrived for him at his home in Fayetteville, N. C., informing him that his mother, a native of Holland, had been lost on a torpedoed ship and that he stood in line to inherit between three and four million dollars.

Corporal Hollenga was attached to Base Hospital No. 65, overseas, and soon received notice of the fortune left to him.

Eighty-ton Whale Caught.

The largest whale caught this season in the North Pacific measured eighty-nine feet in length and weighed eighty tons. With the season completed and nine hundred and ninety-nine whales captured, the men of Vancouver, B. C., engaged in the industry are receiving from three thousand dollars to three thousand five hundred dollars each for the past summer's work.

Old Slave at Work.

Silas Gooch, ninety-nine years old, slave of the late William Gooch, produced last year with a grubbing hoe three hundred dollars' worth of tobacco and three barrels of corn. The old man is hale and hearty and as polite as a dancing master.

Clock Stealing a Big German Trait.

The Germans could goose step in time every well indeed, but, their watches and clocks never told the hour correctly. French histories recall that in the Franco-Prussian War the conquering Prussians stole every clock they could get and during the fighting along the Marne the Americans reported the Germans up to their old trick at clock stealing, shipping

the timepieces into Germany to take the places of the home-made variety that could never be depended upon. A recent issue of "Munsey's Magazine" has a few sarcastic things to say upon German efficiency as exemplified in their clock making.

Was it not perhaps a favorable omen that the Germans, with all their much-vaunted efficiency, have never been able to construct a clock equal to the product of their neighbors? We know of an American gentleman whose constant support, as well as exasperation, during the war has been a particularly illogical and unreliable German-made clock. In the darkest hours of the Allied cause, when the achievements of the enemy seemed to indicate an almost superhuman effectiveness of organization, he has found comfort and hope in the symbolic vulnerability of this atrocious clock—a clock equipped with an elaborate system of strikes and chimes which excel only in their ability to go astray.

The French have always rivaled the Swiss and the Dutch as makers of fine clocks. We are not to be despised ourselves in that respect as any good Yankee timepiece can demonstrate. Some time ago a humorous weekly published the picture of a Tommy in a first-line trench, whose recently opened parcel from home divulged a new alarm clock. The recipient remarked:

"Well, now, that there certainly is a thoughtful gift."

We should not have said that there was a crying need for this horological specimen at the front. We do believe, however, that no race which is unable to manufacture a reputable clock could rule the world.

Ever Hear of the Isle of Utilla?

Worth while seems life on the Isle of Utilla. Its place on the map would be hard to find, but it's worth discovering. Away off in a southern sea, never heard from before and but little known, it comes to the knowledge of the Pan-American Union that here have Americans found a home that others enjoy when they are dead.

"We call it a lazy man's paradise," says the message from this land of delight, "not that the inhabitants are necessarily indolent, but simply because a large amount of labor is superfluous. Nature provides for nearly all our wants here as in most tropical countries. Farming is our principal occupation, yet there is not a plow on the island. Frost is unknown and extreme heat is never experienced. Ninety degrees in the shade would be an unusually high temperature. Our grade schools are of high standard, attendance being compulsory ten months in the year. American text books exclusively are used and social life could not be distinguished from that of the United States."

Utilla is one of the Bay Islands, a string of six verdant keys in the Bay of Honduras, an arm of the Caribbean Sea which were discovered by Columbus in 1502. They were then thickly populated by native Indians who became slaves. The islands now are inhabited wholly by English-speaking people.

"The first family to settle here," goes on the letter, "was that of Joseph Cooper, who found upon landing two lone American young men, Samuel and Joshua Warren, by name. A few years later came

Mark G. Morgan, an American from Philadelphia. The descendants of these men now inhabit the islands. These pioneers were of Puritan stock, all seafarers imbued with the spirit of adventure who, though filled with wanderlust, found conditions on the island so ideal that they planted their stakes deep and said, 'Alabama—here we rest.'"

It seems that other emigrants continued to arrive, until in 1852 there were so many that they petitioned the governor of Belize to administer them as a British colony. This was done until 1860, when the island was ceded to Honduras. "The change somewhat discouraged the people at first," says the letter, "but they soon learned that the laws of Honduras were equally just and allowed all the privileges in the pursuit of life and happiness enjoyed under British rule. The administration of the present governor, R. Barahona Mejia, whose headquarters are at Roatan, the capital, is giving general satisfaction."

Of the principal exports ten million coconuts are sent yearly to the United States. There are fourteen Methodist churches and six of the Seventh Day Adventists on the islands, with more than seven hundred members and three hundred children in their Sunday schools.

Blows Pin Into Boy's Eye.

Thomas Murphy, aged five years, while playing in front of his home in New York City was struck in the left eye by a pin blown through a putty blower by a larger boy. Doctor Thomas Sheehan took him to the Eye and Ear Hospital where, it is said, he may lose the sight of the eye.

Serving As Deserter, Gets Millions.

Gordon Reed Patterson, serving a five-year term in the disciplinary barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, was notified recently that he had fallen heir to five million dollars through the death of an uncle at St. Paul.

The telegram stated twenty-five thousand dollars has been placed in a Kansas City bank for Patterson's immediate use. He was convicted of desertion and his sentence will expire in February, 1922.

Faithful Horse.

While driving alone from the home of his sister, Mrs. Delancey Prince, in Cheshire, Conn., to his home in Windsor, Addison G. Wheeler, aged seventy-nine, Civil War veteran, died suddenly, but the horse took his dead master home. The whinnying of the horse attracted a neighbor, Leo Barney, who discovered Mr. Wheeler dead in the buggy.

Workers Like Music.

Musical organizations—bands and choral societies—organized among the employees of large industrial plants tend to create a cheerfulness and esprit de corps that are reflected in better relations between workmen and employers, and in increased production, with the improved wages and profits that result therefrom.

"Happiness and contentment find expression in song," reads an article in a bulletin prepared by the department of labor. "The choral society, too, is a

cheerful means of establishing sociability and fostering good fellowship.

"As between the chorus and the band, the chorus has the stronger appeal. Band instruments are expensive, and the number of players is limited, while a choral society can embrace almost every one in the plant, and the cost of maintaining it is slight. Rehearsals are rather joyous occasions, and the larger the chorus the greater is the extent of the amusement to be derived from membership. Besides this nearly everybody in a crowd can sing—if the crowd is large the volume of sound will drown the possibly few nasal tenors and raucous basses.

"At any rate, the introduction of music among our industries will prove to be beneficial, whether it is band or choral music."

Prize-winning Cabbage Fills Wheelbarrow.

A cabbage which would satisfy the desire of the most ardent advocate of intensive gardening was recently exhibited at a community fair in Wisconsin. With its immense outer leaves this prize winner more than filled a wheelbarrow. That it was a first-class, compact head is indicated by the fact that it weighed twenty-five pounds.

Why Not Scientific Literature in English?

It has been the habit of most of our English and American scientists, as well as those in other countries, to publish their discoveries first in German and then—if they get to it—to publish in their own language, writes Frank A. Spragg in "Science."

A few years ago, when desiring an English translation of a German four-volume work on the breeding of field crops, the present writer located translators, took up the matter with the publisher, and looked for an English publisher. The American publishing houses agreed that the data should be in English, but considered that they would not sell enough copies to pay for the undertaking.

Is it not about time that the English-speaking people see to it that the scientific literature be published in English? Germany has furnished public funds when the publisher of technical data was not able to sell enough copies to make a profit. "Can't the English people do as well?"

Time Bombs Make German Planes Self-destructive.

To enable airmen to destroy their machines after making forced landings within the allied lines, nearly all German biplanes for more than a year past have been equipped with time bombs. One of these is installed near the aeroplane's fuel tank. A handle at the top of the device, when raised, starts the clock-work, which explodes the charge in ten minutes.

Plans for Railway from Paris to Athens.

With the cessation of hostilities, plans are taking shape for the inauguration in May, 1919, of a through train from Paris to Athens, and on to Piræus, the port of Athens.

This train will leave Paris at noon on Saturdays and will proceed via Milan, Venice, Trieste, Belgrade, Nish, arriving in Athens Tuesday morning. It will carry Anglo-Indian and other Far Eastern mails and passengers, and will in this way vastly increase the im-

portance of the port of Piræus, which in future will be the starting place of steamers for the Far East. This will bring Greece hundreds of miles nearer western Europe in distance and several days nearer in time.

Indian Chief Buys Bonds.

Chief Batiste George, head of an Indian tribe at Penticton, B. C., has been given the only individual honor flag awarded by Canada in the recent Victory Loan drive. Chief Batiste bought \$21,000 worth of bonds. He said he wanted his investment held in trust for the education of his grandchildren, so that they might not be called "coyotes" by the white men.

Soldier More Burdened Than Armored Knight.

Most persons have the impression that the mail-clad knight carried an enormous weight, yet the largest, heaviest suit of armor in the Tower of London weighs only sixty-six pounds, whereas every British soldier carries now from seventy-five to ninety pounds. Also, the cavalry horses of to-day, though less sturdy than those ridden by knights of old, carry more weight than the horses of the days of armor.

Bee Farming Opportunities in Mexico.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec is well suited to bee culture, not only because of the absence of frost, but also by reason of the abundant supply of nectar-producing plants. The woods are full of flowering trees that blossom, one after another, throughout the year, and many of these yield an abundance of nectar.

Many of the difficulties with which the bee raisers of the United States have to contend are absent here. Generally the bees are not troubled with paralysis or other sickness, and the moth is practically unknown. Bees seem to die only from carelessness in extracting too much honey from the brood chambers and from the effects of drought. Notwithstanding the existence of such favorable conditions the industry is just in its beginning, with several Americans in the lead.

There is little local demand for honey, the people not being accustomed to its use. Hence the necessity for exporting. The numerous church observances create a great demand for beeswax for candles.

Duck Hawks Are Rare.

S. W. Comstock, of Boston, sends some information about duck hawks that may be interesting to bird men. These hawks are a comparatively rare bird that breeds in Massachusetts, and not a common breeder. Mr. Comstock suggests that the commonwealth should protect them.

"During the years 1882-3-4-5 and 6," he says, "I had a permit from the State to collect birds and their eggs for ornithological purposes. April 27, 1884, I got a set of two eggs from the south end of Sugar Loaf Mountain, South Deerfield, Mass. The shelf where the eggs were was on the steepest part of the acric, and by means of an inch rope they were obtained. The eggs lay on the bare rock. Incubation had commenced in one about two days—the other was fresh. Both were blown on the side from one small hole. A man on the mountain offered six dollars apiece for

them. The flight of the birds was so rapid that they could not easily be shot, but would fly down at the intruder and pass like a flash, making a most hideous noise. This site has been used many years by the hawks. Two nests of young have been taken and one or two eggs besides those mentioned above. All but one have been taken from the same shelf, which was a slightly curved rock and slanting downward with but a few feathers, and nothing else. The color of the eggs was a reddish buff, with finely spattered spots of darker shades of the same color.

"At this date, 1884, the only places in Massachusetts, to my knowledge, where the duck hawk breeds, are Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke, and Sugar Loaf and Mount Talcott in Connecticut. May 13, 1884, I got two eggs from Sugar Loaf Mountain. This nest was on the north end of the cliff, but down thirty feet from the top, and was, as before, only a mere slant in the shelf, large enough to hold the eggs and a person standing with the aid of a rope. The old bird was shot at, but its flight was so rapid it was not killed. These eggs varied greatly in color, one being of the description as those mentioned before; the other, of a coffee color, with spots of brown and darker shades. Blowing of the eggs showed that they had been laid but a short time.

"The eggs of those hawks are now worth ten dollars apiece. But the bird is not yet extinct in its old haunts, for in the spring of 1917 some good pictures of the nest and young, as well as the old bird, were taken at Mount Sugar Loaf."

One Hundred and Fifty-five Training Plants.

War-time training plants will be extensively continued into peace conditions, according to reports that have reached the training service of the department of labor. In one hundred and fifty-five plants that adopted industrial training for the period of the war the work will be maintained, so successful have the training rooms proved.

Many manufacturers have notified the service that they intend to initiate or continue training departments in their plants.

Watch Still Intact.

When Adam J. Holdcraft was digging a rabbit from under the floor of the grand stand of the East Enterprise Fair Ground, at Laurenceburg, Ind., he unearthed a woman's gold watch and chain. The name, Mrs. John P. Dorrell, and the date, December 25, 1900, was engraved on the inside of the case. Mr. Holdcraft took the watch and chain to the home of Mrs. Dorrell on Mount Carmel ridge, where it was identified as her property. Mrs. Dorrell said she lost the watch ten years ago last August while attending the annual fair. It was a Christmas present, having been received nearly twenty years ago. The watch when wound and set began running.

Reduces Death Rate of Children.

Figures compiled by the municipal health bureau of the city of Milwaukee show that the mortality of infants under one year of age in that city in 1912 represented twenty-five per cent of all the deaths reported. In 1917, it was twenty per cent. This decrease is attributed to the child welfare work car-

ried on by a local committee and inspired by the children's bureau, department of labor. The establishment of health clinics for sick children and of municipal "keep well" centers where healthy children are taken for observation and for advice concerning methods of retaining health have brought good results. The prenatal clinics for mothers, where intelligent hygiene for motherhood is taught, also have been found of value in helping to reduce the number of babies who die in the first month of existence on account of lack of proper prenatal care of the mothers.

Hun Beer Bottles Provide Insulation.

In German East Africa the Germans made use of their empty beer bottles by cutting them in two and using the tops for electric wire insulation, while they sold the bottoms to the natives for drinking glasses. The German beer drinkers patriotically kept up the supply.

Lieutenant Pierre Daye, of the Belgian army, told about it recently at the Algonquin Hotel, New York City. He has been temporary attaché at the Belgian Embassy at Washington. Lieutenant Daye was on one of the Belgian expeditionary forces which penetrated into German East Africa and was at the capture of the capital, Tabora.

"We marched one thousand two hundred miles, a journey of fifteen months, through jungle and what not," he said. "We crossed and recrossed the trail of the early explorers, and we came upon the New York 'Herald' stone marking the spot where Livingstone met Stanley on the noted rescue expedition of the 'Herald.' It was jungle then. Now it is on a beautiful automobile highway, and about the little tablet has sprung up a prosperous trading post.

"You can fancy our surprise after such a journey to be met by a terrible artillery fire out of Tabora. Shells of huge caliber burst around us. We could not figure it out. At last we captured a cannon of five-inch caliber. It was one of three of such dimension the Germans had at Tabora. They had taken them from their raider, the 'Koenigsburg,' and dragged them nine hundred miles into the country.

We learned that thirty oxen hauled each piece. It took us seven days to take the town.

"We found how the Germans had used beer bottles to make insulators and drinking glasses for the natives, and we found evidence that slave trading had been legalized by the German authorities before and after the outbreak of the war. The Belgian forces—there were two expeditions in conjunction with the British one under General Smuts—occupied a territory in German Africa that was six times as large as our own Belgium.

"We had with us only native troops—about twelve thousand blacks and one thousand white officers, commissioned and noncommissioned. We had many of the Uele tribe of negroes—wonderful fighters with the bayonet. They learned the European style of bayonet fighting quickly and did it well, it being similar to their warfare with spears, but under artillery fire they were not the most wonderful soldiers in the world, especially when the three marine cannon opened up on us. We also had along many of a tribe, not negroes, who are said to be descendants of the ancient

Egyptians. They are similar in appearance to the Aztecs of Mexico, dark, but with big noses, straight black hair and thin lips. Their king is seven feet tall and most of his subjects are as tall or taller."

"Speak to Aliens."

When Flint, Mich., a few days ago decided to make the effort to bring its entire foreign-born population of sixteen thousand persons into American citizenship, so that it might be the first all-American city in the United States, one of the most stimulating occurrences of the big civic meeting at which the program was adopted came in the speech of an elderly Flint resident of French nativity.

Rising to address the meeting, he said:

"I'm French, and I'm proud of it. I have just one criticism to make of this country.

"That is, that no one apparently ever took the trouble to interest himself in my becoming a citizen. The foreigner, you say, is shy. That is so. Therefore, don't leave him to himself. Make him realize that you welcome him; that you want him to stay here as an American, and that all Americans are his friends.

"There's nothing that appeals so much to a man in a strange land as a friendly word, whether it comes from a friend or a stranger. If employers and superintendents in business plants would think in the morning to bid their foreign-born workers a cheery good day, they would be surprised at the results that would follow in the way of coöperation and friendliness. And, by the way, that is something that need not be confined exclusively to the foreign born."

Women Coöperating With Employment Service.

One great force making for an active public opinion in favor of after-the-war development of industrial guidance and placement for women is the action taken by large organizations of women in support of the United States employment service.

The council of national defense, represented by over 17,000 local organizations, through Miss Hannah J. Patterson, associate director of the field division, which directs all State work, has written:

"To State division chairman of woman's committee council of national defense: The aim of the United States employment service is the greatest possible usefulness to both employers and workers, and both should be encouraged to avail themselves of its services. An immediate task undertaken by the division for women's work of the United States employment service is the securing for women who patriotically responded to the calls for the Federal agencies for war work in Washington suitable positions in the States from which they came. Will you not suggest that the chairman of the State division of the women's committee get in touch with the Federal director for woman's work in each State and render them all possible assistance."

The national league for woman's service, through its president, Maude Wetmore, advises all State chairmen of that organization:

"Possibilities of coöperation between the league and the employment service have increased. Will you get in touch with your Federal director of the United States employment service at once and offer to him and to the woman assistant director the coöperation

of the league? The United States employment service stands for service to the employer, service to the worker. Will you make use of this service and encourage its use wherever and however possible by employer and employee?"

The national consumers' league, of which Secretary Newton D. Baker is president, representing the first national woman's organization which has held a convention since the armistice was signed, passed a recommendation strongly indorsing the United States employment service and pledged itself to ask Congress for a special appropriation for the furtherance of the work for women by the employment service.

The national council of women with its affiliate organizations, representing 10,000,000 women, through its president, Mrs. Phillip N. Moore, is issuing a letter to its constituent organizations asking active coöperation nationally and in their respective States where they are organized with the United States employment service. Other organizations which are concerned with industrial, agricultural or similar phases of the whole subject of women's employment have pledged coöperation. The total force of public opinion controlled by members of these organizations is very great.

In October alone the woman's section of the employment service made over 66,000 placements, which is an indication of its present scope. With the support of these organizations the officials of the employment service believe that it may be made increasingly useful in the future development of the woman in industry movement.

The Origin of "Lime-juicer."

It is generally known that a familiar, though altogether affectionate, name given British sailors to their American brothers of the sea is "lime-juicer" or, more briefly, "limic." To most of us the origin of the pleasantry was wrapt in obscurity.

But the London "Lancet," in the course of a learned inquiry pertaining to scurvy, uncovers the fact that the consumption of lime juice was introduced in the British navy as a measure against scurvy, and resulted in the disappearance of that disease early in the last century.

The so-called lime juice was really lemon juice and not connected with the American lime. But the origin of "lime-juicer" becomes apparent.

Making Hollow Concrete Articles.

According to the Bruckenbau, the production of hollow concrete bodies completely inclosed, which hitherto only been possible within certain limits, made easier by the new patent system of Stefan Rohrer of Munich, who proposes to inclose a block of concrete of the required shape in concrete. Of course, small openings or channels would be left, by means of which the thaw water could escape. In this way it is possible to produce not only small concrete bodies with hollow centers, but large ones as well. The process can be applied to artificial stone.

An electric alarm clock which awakens deaf sleepers by jarring their beds has been invented in Germany.

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We give herewith a list of some of the back numbers in print. You can have your news dealer order them or they will be sent direct by the publishers to any address upon receipt of the price in money or postage stamps.

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|---|---|--|
| 140—Buffalo Bill's Ordeal of Fire. | 215—Buffalo Bill's "Pieces-of-Eight." | 280—Buffalo Bill's Sioux Tackle. |
| 141—Buffalo Bill Among the Man-eaters. | 216—Buffalo Bill and the Eight Vaqueros. | 290—Buffalo Bill and the Talking Statue. |
| 142—Buffalo Bill's Casket of Pearls. | 217—Buffalo Bill's Unlucky Siesta. | 291—Buffalo Bill's Medicine Trail. |
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| 152—Buffalo Bill Among the Pueblos. | 227—Buffalo Bill's Promise to Pay. | 301—Buffalo Bill and the Baslik. |
| 153—Buffalo Bill's Four-footed Pards. | 228—Buffalo Bill's Diamond Hitch. | 302—Buffalo Bill and the Klan of Kan. |
| 154—Buffalo Bill's Protégé. | 229—Buffalo Bill and the Wheel of Fate. | 303—Buffalo Bill and the Sorceress. |
| 155—Buffalo Bill Ensnared. | 230—Buffalo Bill and the Pool of Mystery. | 304—Buffalo Bill in the Ute Outbreak. |
| 156—Buffalo Bill's Pick-up. | 231—Buffalo Bill and the Deserter. | 305—Buffalo Bill and the Border Belle. |
| 157—Buffalo Bill's Quest. | 232—Buffalo Bill's Island in the Air. | 306—Buffalo Bill's Lost Trail. |
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| 162—Buffalo Bill's Rattlesnake Trail. | 237—Buffalo Bill's Boldest Stroke. | 311—Buffalo Bill and the Toll-Takers. |
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330—Buffalo Bill and the Silk Lasso.
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